Comprehensively Reformed Christianity

The Revelation
of
Jesus Christ

***CRC* Book IV**

The Doctrines of the Last Days
A Verse by Verse In-depth Study of the Book of the Revelation

Second Edition

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"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. 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"*** **(Re.1:1-3).**

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Table of Abbreviations

Bible Book Names

Old Testament

Genesis…Ge.
Exodus…Ex.
Leviticus…Le.
Numbers…Nu.
Deuteronomy…De.
Joshua…Jos.
Judges…Jud.
Ruth…Ru.
1st Samuel…1Sa.
2nd Samuel…2Sa.
1st Kings…1Ki.
2nd Kings…2Ki.
1st Chronicles…1Chr.
2nd Chronicles…2Chr.
Ezra…Ezr.
Nehemiah…Ne.
Esther…Est.
Job…Jb.
Psalms…Ps.
Proverbs…Pr.
Ecclesiastes…Ec.
Song of Solomon…Song.
Isaiah…Is.
Jeremiah…Je.
Lamentations…Lam.
Ezekiel…Eze.
Daniel…Da.
Hosea…Ho.
Joel…Jl.
Amos…Am.
Obadiah…Obad.
Jonah…Jona.
Micah…Mi.
Nahum…Na.
Habakkuk…Hab.
Zephaniah…Zep.
Haggai…Hag.
Zechariah…Zec.
Malachi…Mal.

New Testament

Matthew…Mt.
Mark…Mk.
Luke…Lu.
John…Jn.
Acts…Ac.
Romans…Ro.
1st Corinthians…1Co.
2nd Corinthians…2Co.
Galatians…Ga.
Ephesians…Ep.
Philippians…Ph.
Colossians…Col.
1st Thessalonians…1Th.
2nd Thessalonians…2Th.
1st Timothy…1Ti.
2nd Timothy…2Ti.
Titus…Tit.
Philemon…Phm.
Hebrews…He.
James…Ja.
1st Peter…1Pe.
2nd Peter…2Pe.
1st John…1Jn.
2nd John…2Jn.
3rd John…3Jn.
Jude…Jude.
Revelation…Re.

These abbreviations are used throughout this work followed by the chapter number, and a colon, followed by a verse number. (i.e. Jn.7:13 refers to the book of John, Chapter 7, verse 13). If multiple verses are being referred to, a comma is placed between non-consecutive verses while a dash is placed between the first and last verse of a continuous text. (i.e. Jn.7:13,15 would refer to verses 13 and 15, but not 14). (Jn.7:13–18 would refer to verses 13 through 18). If the notation includes more than one reference, a semicolon is used to separate references. (i.e. Jn.7:13; Mt.2:1 refers to John, Chapter 7, verse 13 and Matthew, Chapter 2, verse 1). At various places the letter "v" is used as an abbreviation for verse, and "vv" is used as an abbreviation for verses. In addition, one will often find the abbreviation cf. that means to confer or compare the verses that this abbreviation indicates with the text at hand.

At various places throughout this work, one will occasionally find a word or short text within quotations of Scripture or other quoted text that is enclosed in brackets [ ]. It should be clearly understood that this text is not a part of the original text that is being quoted, but is an annotation that was added by this author to amplify or clarify the meaning of the quoted text.

Miscellaneous Abbreviations

CRC: Comprehensively Reformed Christianity
AKJV: Authorized King James Version
ASV: American Standard Version of 1901
NASB: New American Standard Bible
ESV: English Standard Version

External References

We often refer to the writings of others in this book and have attempted to properly credit them for their efforts by naming them and listing the titles of their works, and where available their publishers and dates of publication are listed. (cf. Bibliography on page 705).

Far more frequently, the author's own *Comprehensively Reformed Christianity* (*CRC*) books and booklets, as well as various *CRC* Newsletter Articles, are referenced throughout the text of this book. The full texts of all those documents are currently available as PDF documents on our website: www.CRChristianity.org. All of those materials may be read, downloaded and optionally printed out[1] for the reader's personal use.[2]

While access to all of the materials available on our website is not necessary for a comprehensive understanding of this book on the Revelation, the reader is invited to make personal use of any or all of them regarding other important Christian doctrines and practices should they find it in their spiritual interest to do so.

[1]While Newsletter Articles are commonly four or less pages in length, books and booklets are often tens and hundreds of pages in length making the printing of their text from our website both expensive and impractical. Therefore, bound printed copies of this author's books and booklets have been made available through a secondary secure website that is directly accessible from our website. Please note that a fee will be charged by this commercial website to cover the cost of their computer processing, printing, handling, and shipping. In keeping with the author's determination not to receive any financial benefit from this work, no fees in the form of personal royalties will be charged.

[2]Excerpts taken from all of our *CRC* documents may be quoted and reprinted in additional works subject to basic copyright restrictions and fair use provisions that are fully explained on our website.

About the Second Edition

The First Edition of this book was published in mid 2022, after which it had immediately undergone three rapid Revisions in an attempt to locate and correct grammatical errors, and to include any critical omissions. While contemplating a still Fourth Revision, it was determined that a comprehensive rewrite of the entire text of this book would be beneficial to expand upon important precepts, principles, and concepts that had been introduced within the First Edition.

Reorganized Preamble

The Preamble of this book,[3] which serves as an essential background for the necessary study of the text of the Revelation, had continued to expand within each subsequent revision of the First Edition to the point that it had become a running dialog, which was impossible to keep current without many often-repeated revisions. For that reason, it was decided to finalize the Preamble within this Second Edition to include only major developments found within the ongoing decline of this world's satanically-inspired systems, without attempting to go into exhaustive detail regarding every individual event that has led up to them.[4]

We have expanded the topics on Religious Apostasy and Moral Corruption, but particularly so the last topic on Political Anarchy. Extreme political divisions within national governments and irrational concerns over climate-change will ultimately lead to the fall of Nationalism. We have thus included a rather large section on the many dangers inherent within man's far-advanced technologies and the fearful negative effects of their application that will ultimately lead to governmental Globalism. Globalism will eventually make way for the evil regime of the ultimate

[3]cf. page 31.

[4]Many of those detailed events are discussed within Worldview articles available as Newsletters on our website: www.CRChristianity.org.

world dictatorship of the Antichrist within the final seven-year period of this current age.

Expanded Commentary Section

Many of the more complex doctrinal issues presented within the Commentary of the First Edition had been relegated to various Ancillary Articles in order to make the Commentary of the biblical text easier to follow without undue distraction. Under reexamination, however, it was discovered that some important textual details, which should have been addressed within the Commentary, had been omitted. Within this Second Edition the entire Commentary Section has been critically reexamined for accuracy and reedited to ensure that any significant exposition of the inspired text has not been neglected.

Addendum Articles Reviewed

All of our Addendum Articles were reexamined and reedited where it was deemed necessary to better organize and explain any text that may not have been made adequately clear within the First Edition. In doing so, we have made every effort to firmly ground those ancillary texts within Holy Scripture. We have also reexamined each of them concerning their relevance to the study of the text of the Revelation.

While some Articles were more relevant than others, it was decided to retain all of the Articles included within the First Edition with minor modifications – with the sole exception of the Article on Heaven. Inasmuch as Holy Scripture is largely silent regarding many details concerning Heaven, this Article was expanded in this Second Edition to provide a hypothetical description of the wondrous properties of Heaven that is only very broadly based upon Scripture. It is hoped that it will be accepted in the speculative sense in which it is presented as a blessing to those redeemed on earth who, not unlike this author, must contemplate the wonders and joys of Heaven from afar through the cloudy lens of the human mind's eye even as the Holy Spirit reveals it to our understanding (cf. 1Co. 13:12). ■

Preamble to the Revelation

As this book on the Revelation is being written, the world finds itself in a dreadful inescapable morass of decline that has become deeply entrenched within today's rapidly emerging counter-culture movement. Noted pastor, author, and Bible teacher, the late J. Vernon McGee, expressed his determination that this decline would come about within three ruinous stages, which he referred to as follows: 1) Religious apostasy, 2) Moral awfulness, and 3) Political anarchy.[5] We currently find the first two of those stages being realized in today's world. Moreover, the world is rapidly entering into the final stage of Political Anarchy, inasmuch as an inevitable societal collapse is now visible on the near horizon. With proper deference given to Dr. McGee for his astute observations that were originally stated back in the 1960s, we shall now briefly undertake an up-to-date analysis of those three stages of decline.

Religious Apostasy

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." 1Timothy 4:1,2

While a declining remnant of the true Church on earth still stands firm in faithful opposition to a growing religious apostasy, most of today's faithful Christians find themselves encased within a deceitful system of churchianity in which the temporal church's ambitious social programs and secular agendas prevail, having taken priority over the teaching of Holy Scripture and the clear Gospel mandate.

In his New-Testament epistle, Jude[6] provides us with a brief preamble to *The Revelation* that immediately precedes the Revelation in the

[5]cf. booklet: *America Needs a Declaration of Dependence*, Dr. J. Vernon McGee, currently available for free download on the *Thru the Bible* website: www.ttb.org.

text of the Holy Bible. Within it Jude described a growing apostasy of the faith that had already begun in his day with these words:

> **"[3]Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort** *you* **that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. [4]For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."** (Jude vv. 3, 4).

Although Jude had preferred to write about the wonders of the common salvation that all believers share in Christ, he found it necessary instead to exhort believers to diligently contend for the fundamental doctrines of the apostolic faith, which were being eroded away by an abundance of false teaching. This apostasy in Jude's day had come about as the consequence of certain ungodly men who had crept into the temporal church unnoticed. At first they had sat beside true believers, claiming to be one of them, and over time they had captured the church pulpits. They had represented themselves as godly men as they entered, but underneath their outward facade, they were evil professors of Satan bent upon a total obliteration of the Truth (cf. Mt.7:15; 2Ti. 3:5).[7]

Denial of Essential Christian Doctrine

Those ungodly men soon turned the wondrous grace of God into lasciviousness (i.e. lawless deviate behavior); moreover, they denied that Jesus was God in the flesh; his virgin birth and his bodily resurrection from the dead were renounced as mere foolishness. Since Jesus was no

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[6]Jude (aka Judas) was the half brother of Jesus after the flesh (cf. Mt. 13:35), who had later come to a saving knowledge of Jesus as the Christ following Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead.

[7]The Apostle Paul had described such men as "grievous wolves" that he warned would seek to devour the flock of believers at Ephesus following his departure (cf. Ac. 20:29,30).

longer considered to be God, but a mere man who falsely claimed to possess the properties of deity, they insisted that his words lacked any authority over their own.

Assured Judgment of the Ungodly

> **"[5] I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. [6]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 [7]Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. (**Jude vv. 5-7).

Jude provides three undeniable examples of the ungodly who have already suffered severe judgment for their sinful nefarious activities. Even Satan's angels who had rebelled against God are currently in everlasting chains awaiting the final judgment to come.

> **"Likewise also these *filthy* dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities"** (Jude v 8)

Those ungodly who have invaded the temporal church defile the flesh, despise Christ's dominion, and openly blaspheme God – speaking evil of Heavenly dignities and the honor and dignity of true believers – even as they themselves seek to breach all moral boundaries firmly set in place by God's Word. There is no escape from God's severe judgment possible for them; nevertheless, these imaginative dreamers believe that they can escape through their unbelief.

> **"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The**

Lord rebuke thee" (Jude v. 9).

So great is the dignity of all Heavenly beings that even the great archangel Michael dared not make any railing accusations against the fallen archangel Satan who had argued to claim the body of Moses as one of his own evildoers to prevent him from inheriting eternal life. Only God has the ultimate authority to bring any accusation against any of his creatures, such that Michael could only say to Satan, "The Lord rebuke thee."

> **"But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves"** (Jude v. 10).

However, ungodly men dare speak evil of divine dignities and God's Truth about which they are totally ignorant (cf. 2:Ti.3:7); all the while, they proudly exhibit the indignities of their own flesh as do savage beasts, thus corrupting themselves in gross iniquity even as they speak evil about those dignities about whom they know nothing at all (cf. 2Ti.3:6).

Advantage Sought for Personal Gain

> **"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core"** (Jude v. 11).

These ungodly men have in like manner followed after the way of Cain by defying the necessity of blood sacrifice, offering up instead beautiful fruit that spoils and rots away. They seek after monetary rather than spiritual rewards as did Balaam, who betrayed Israel and led them astray with strange women. As did the sons of Kore, they arrogantly seek after positions of authority that have not been granted them by God.

> **"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds** *they are* **without water, carried about of winds; trees**

> **whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots"** (Jude v. 12)

These are as ugly spots on believers' love feasts.[8] They are as dark empty clouds that promise rain, but instead only block out the light of divine Truth – even as they are blown about with every imaginable wind of false doctrine. They are like late autumn trees, the fruit of which has shriveled up and falls to the earth to rot away. They are twice dead: both in their exposed roots and in their teaching of false doctrine that their decay had produced. Moreover, they are as...

> **"Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever"** (Jude v. 13).

They rage back and forth in conflicting oratory as undulating waves of the sea in which their shameful condition is exposed as it encounters the shores of biblical reality. They roam about in their teaching far away from Truth much as do stars that have lost their way to ultimately wander off course into the "blackness of darkness forever."

> **14 "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15To 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"** (Jude vv. 14,15).

Other than here in the epistle of Jude there is no Scriptural evidence that Enoch[9] spoke these words. Nevertheless, this text almost certainly

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[8]"Feasts of charity" are equivalent to today's fellowship meals wherein the entire church gathers together to lovingly share in various aspects of each others personal lives, thus differentiating this feast from the more solemn celebration of the Lord's Table.

[9]Enoch was the seventh Patriarch from Adam, of whom it is said that he walked close to God. So much so, that he was translated directly into Heaven having never experienced death (cf. He.11:5).

refers to Christ's Return to Earth as its Conquering King (cf. Commentary Page 369), whereupon He will bring along with him the vast armies of Heaven, consisting of a great number of saints, as He victoriously engages the ungodly in the great battle of Armegeddon.[10]

> **"These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling** *words,* **having men's persons in admiration because of advantage"** (Jude v. 16).

These ungodly men murmurer and complain about true believers; while walking after their own lusts, they speak great arrogant words to gain the admiration of other fallen men; deceiving them in order to exercise temporal authority over them.[11]

We find that the apostasy of the faith that had begun in Jude's day has continued on throughout the Church age.[12] Within today's world, still other ungodly men (and women), continue to capture high places of authority within today's churches in an attempt to undermine the true apostolic faith. We shall now briefly discuss that continuing religious apostasy within the text that follows:

God's Divine Word Displaced by Human Philosophy

Comprehensive and forthright expositions of God's Word from the pulpit has all but disappeared. In it's place, we increasingly hear ever-shorter philosophical dissertations after the supposed wisdom of men, that were designed to exhort tolerance for almost all forms of aberrant belief and immoral behavior. Sin is now routinely viewed as mere awkward missteps that "God" easily forgives out of an abundance of his

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[10] cf. The War of Armageddon, Commentary page 372.

[11] At this place in his epistle, Jude discontinues his discussion regarding ungodly apostate men to speak about the necessary perseverance of the saints as the great apostasy of the last days draws ever near. We shall continue to exposit the remainder of Jude's epistle within that context beginning with verse 17 in the Epilogue of this book on page 688.

[12] cf. *CRC* Book III, Sections 17 thru 19.

grace, and any shame for sins committed are considered to be the result of a lack of faith in the autonomous nature of the human race.

With a few notable exceptions, today's temporal churches have become a meaningless pseudo-religious organization having no spiritual discernment or power. Thus the living God no longer has a vital place within the daily lives of today's men and women. God has become to them a mere fetish – an amulet, that can be hidden away in a pocket of their mind should the need arise for supernatural intervention only during dire emergencies.

Liberation Theology and the Social Gospel

The biblical doctrine of eternal salvation has been replaced with a temporal post-modern social gospel of liberation theology – liberation from God and from all of his divine laws that He had before enacted for mankind's good and well-being. No longer living in the Truth of God's Word, men's minds are left wide open to the delusive lies of the deceiver, even as the warning voice of wisdom is stifled (cf. Pr. 8). Liberty from sin and its eternal consequences, which is abundantly available in Christ, is being willingly exchanged for oppressive secular opinion offered under the guise of a nebulous promise of temporal freedom that has no eternal permanence.

Petty Legalism

Extra-biblical rules imposed by many of today's churches have already supplanted the unassailable authority of God's Word regarding mankind's sin. In some churches, petty-legalism has replaced God's divine Law with more easily attainable regulations of dress, diet, and outward conduct, through which an imagined state of pseudo-holiness is achieved to salve the inward knowledge of ever-present sin.[13] Having omitted the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and faith, as they ought not to have done; they strain at the insignificant "gnats" of out-

[13] cf. *The Holiness Movement, Comprehensively Reformed Christianity* Book III page 361 ff, and Newsletter Article January 2015.

ward appearance, while swallowing the "camel" of inward iniquity whole (cf. Mt.23:23,24).

The truth is that every sin that a man or woman commits, whether exposed or hidden, is shameful and deadly serious, for every one is unmitigated evil that greatly offends the holiness of a loving God. Yet, God so loved the world He had created that the sins of the whole world were placed upon Christ's shoulders so that He should bear shame and suffer death for each and every one of us. Hence, forgiveness of sin is not automatic or routine; nor is it received without tremendous cost to Jesus Christ, the sin bearer, who shed his own blood to make full atonement for us (cf. Jn. 3:16,17). Modern man has rejected that divine offering as being offensive to their prideful reprobate lifestyles.

Not surprisingly, the true worship of God in many of our modern churches has now deteriorated into meaningless lifeless formality. To relieve the boredom of repetitious supplications and rote prayers, all simulation of reverent worship has been replaced in some churches with a loud mind-numbing musical delusion of emotional arousal, through which a false sense of self-worth is derived and aggrandized over the sovereignty of God in Christ. They have become heady and high-minded, traitors to the faith, and "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (cf. 2Ti 3:2,4). Rather than most of today's church assemblies providing an opportunity for men and women to worship and glorify God in a state of genuine repentance, many have become but mere pseudo-religious clubs as well as vast entertainment venues that seek to glorify sin as a natural activity that is to be tolerated, even applauded.

Erroneous Injection of the Female Principal

As men increasingly viewed Christian ministry as a lucrative profession, rather than a divine calling, women also entered into the pulpit ministry in direct opposition to the clear biblical warning against introducing a female principal into positions of authority over men since by their gentle naive nature they can be more easily deceived by the evil one (cf. 1Ti. 2:11-14). The consequences of ignoring Paul's stern warn-

ing within our modern-day churches has been disastrous for the perpetuation of sound biblical doctrine and practice.[14]

The Resurgence of Demonic Paganism

In the absence of sound biblical doctrine, a notable Neo-paganism[15] came forth to fill the vacancy left within modern man's minds through their total rejection of God and his Christ. The light of Truth was soon displaced by the darkness of the occult. This Neo-paganism is recognizable in various forms today: 1) Spiritism, the purported communication with the dead through a psychic demonic medium, which includes intercessory prayer offered up to the dead. 2) Satan worship and the worship of his demons; and 3) the dark arts of Wicca and Witchcraft. While foolish men and women may believe that they benefit from and are in control of these dark relationships, they soon discover that their souls are fully possessed by the various demonic entities that they worship,[16] such that they must also ultimately inherit the eternal fires of Hell along with their demonic hosts.

Hence, we discover that there is a resurgence of the worship of raw nature over nature's God through Metaphysical Evolutionism. There is also a resurgence of the worship of nature within modern-day Environmentalism, which in combination with Metaphysical Evolutionism has ultimately led to fallen man's total denial of God's existence, his specific creation of the earth, and his unique creation of mankind in his own image in order to accomplish through them his divine purpose of the ultimate eradication of all iniquity.[17]

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[14]cf. Newsletter Article, March 2015.

[15]A discussion of various elements of the Neo-paganism movement can be found in *Comprehensively Reformed Christianity*, Book III, beginning on page 430.

[16]cf. Commentary, pages 237 through 242.

[17]cf. Article The Mystery of Iniquity; Iniquity Eradicated Forever, page 588.

Moral Corruption

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Isaiah 5:20

Because an apostate mankind has rejected God, He has given them over to a perverted deviate mindset that has pummeled and ultimately stifled their conscience (cf. Ro. 1:28).[18] Without the restraint of an active collective social conscience, an awful societal corruption quickly followed. As a consequence of the numbed mind's inability to reason from fact and truth, all natural inhibitions vanished, and an irreversible moral corruption of the individual's soul followed.

The Delusion of Personal Autonomy

The apostate denied God's divine right to rule over their lives, thus becoming a law unto themselves. They claim personal autonomy, wherein they essentially see themselves as a god answerable only unto themselves to think and do as they please. They love and worship themselves as the center of all that is, seeing anything they desire as rightfully theirs for the taking. They are like rebellious sheep that have gone astray from their Shepherd and have instead followed the goats of mankind unto rocky and dangerous heights of false grandeur from where they can no longer hear the voice of their Shepherd calling them back.

They have become proud boasters of their assumed self-worth, and in doing so they blaspheme the Holy God who had created them for his divine purpose. They became disobedient to their parents who had borne them into the world and who had set proper boundaries to their activities for their safety and well-being. Thus, they are not thankful to

[18]It must be clearly understood that God is not the source or cause of this perverted deviate mindset. It has come about as a consequence of man's willful rejection of Him, and the exclusion of all his divine laws from their thought processes. For that reason, God can but surrender them to wallow in their corrupted nature that leads them into ever-greater depths of depravity.

anyone for anything; they consider all that they receive as their just due. Therefore, they have become unholy; no longer set aside to display God's glory in a fallen world; they have become reprobate.[19]

Societal Corruption

As the reprobate became increasingly more depraved, societal corruption became evident in many different ways; alcoholism and addiction to newer even more powerful mind-altering drugs, is rampant among the world's populations thus destroying their ability to think wisely. Theft and gambling has largely replaced the work ethic and dependence upon God's providence for life's basic needs. The unrestrained greed of the ungodly led them to violence leading to murder for personal gain. As the crime rate increased, law enforcement not only found it difficult to maintain control, but found themselves to be a target of the violent criminal element. An increasingly liberalized judicial system exacerbated the problem by releasing criminals back on the streets for various nebulous reasons having little to do with actual jurisprudence.

Fallen mankind today sees themselves as deserving a life of ease, entertainment, and pleasure without restraint. For that reason, spectator sports occupy nearly every spare moment of their thoughts, and sports gambling adds to that preoccupation. Pornography, which greatly degrades the true worth of women, is epidemic through abundant printed material, R and X rated movies produced by Hollywood and other mass entertainment industries, as well as the world-wide proliferation of sexually explicit images over the Internet.[20] The explosion of this form of voyeurism has greatly contributed to the devastation of natural family life through a notable decrease of monogamous marriages between devoted men and women.[21] This sinful preoccupation has led to an in-

[19] The word "reprobate" as it is used here defines persons who are devoid of any moral scruples and have thus deviated from God's intended purposes for them to the extent that they have become abandoned as worthless castaways into the deep sea of their own depravity.

[20] cf. The Internet, page 60.

[21] Christian marriage was described in some detail in our Newsletter Article of February 2014.

crease of adultery and divorce, leading on to widespread polyamory, fornication, rape, and incest.

Expansion of Prostitution

This same preoccupation also led to an increase of prostitution as more and more debased women sold their bodies as a way of earning a living. Prostitution is often referred to as the oldest profession in existence, inasmuch as Eve seduced Adam to partake of the forbidden fruit of good and evil. The consequences of the fall were immediate:

> **"Unto the woman [God] 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"** (Ge. 3:16).

This inherited seductive tendency in women to possess a man who in turn will rule over her is evidenced in many ways – beginning with an honorable courtship, wherein women seek to establish a life-long loving relationship with one special man through legal marriage. However, abusive use of this desire is exhibited within evil women who use their wiles to attract and entrap an affluent man into marriage for material wealth, position, and power, through which she seeks to rule over her husband.

The most sinful dimension of this role reversal in which women seek to rule over men is to be found within exotic dance barrooms, so-called "gentlemens' clubs," and within brothels. Not surprisingly, organized crime found this vice to be a suitable way to expand their criminal activities. While in the past prostitution was considered to be a criminal activity that preys on men, and was considered to be a shameful disgrace and curse upon a healthy society, the current sexual revolution is rapidly degrading that moral perspective. This led to the legalization of prostitution in every imaginable form under the guise of what is currently alluded to as gender equality to be gained through "social justice" reform.

Mass Murder of the Unborn

All of those fore-mentioned deviant activities inevitably led to births of many unwanted, unloved and neglected children. As we read in the verse above, God had said to the woman that He would greatly multiply her sorrow and her conception, such that in sorrow she would bring forth children. In sinful response to God's verdict, women, seeking liberation from what they viewed as the "burden" of unwanted children, which often came about as a byproduct of immoral sexual activities, increasingly sought out a means of preventing pregnancy – effectively separating that which they increasingly viewed as "recreational sex" from procreation. This search first led to various crude and ineffective means of contraception, which ultimately ended in the design of a more-effective oral contraception. Nevertheless, complexities associated with the precise use of "the pill" undermined its effectiveness.

Unintended pregnancies continued on with the result that in their desperation women sought out a means of aborting the unborn child from their womb. The frightfully common means was to employ an abortionist to kill and dismember the baby in the womb, and then forcefully extract its remains.[22] In the year 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States legalized abortion as a legitimate therapeutic procedure under the guise of appropriate women's healthcare through a faulty court decision referred to as *Rove v. Wade*. The multi-billion-dollar industry that grew out of the sinful act of abortion continues to debase women and steal life from future generations, as many unwanted babies are sacrificed upon the altar of "human convenience."

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[22]In the Roman world, unwanted babies were often abandoned deep within wilderness areas to die by starvation or by animal predators. Within many Christian societies today, including every state within the United States, there exist what are referred to as safe-haven baby boxes. Those boxes are commonly located at hospitals, fire houses, and other governmental buildings. New mothers can anonymously leave their babies in these boxes if for any reason they find that they cannot properly care for them. While not an ideal solution to unintended pregnancies, the baby lives, receives necessary care, and is eventually offered up for legal adoption.

Ultimate Devaluation of All Human Life

As this sinful flirtation with death expands, all human life becomes expendable to economic and societal expediency. This culture of death will not long pertain only to the unborn. Soon, babies that have survived the womb, could also face termination of their lives if some latent mental or physical "deficiency," or some other unwanted cosmetic trait, is discovered in them.

In addition, voluntary euthanasia is already legally sanctioned for the terminally ill in many cases; and as this culture of death expands, euthanasia could eventually be mandated for all that are deemed to be mentally deficient or physically infirm. Ultimately, it could become mandatory for those who have merely reached a specified age.[23]

The Delusive Sexual Revolution

> **"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves"** (Ro.1:24):

In an act of severe judgment for the killing of their unborn children, God surrendered men and women to the extreme depths of their fleshly lusts. He abandoned them to wallow in depths of their depraved nature through which they established various impure sexual liaisons that could not readily result in human conception. Over time, those unclean lusts led to a decadent sexual revolution that has gained false respectability through its infiltration of political, educational, and religious institutions at an appalling pace. This revolution is essentially a declared war against the transcendent moral order of nature that was firmly established by God in Creation. As we write this preamble, Europe is already lost to this so-called "new sexual morality," and the *United States of America* is breathlessly rushing to surpass it.[24]

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[23] This culture of death is already underway within today's world through the massive proliferation of socialism; wherein, coercive government agencies decide who lives or dies under the guise of "government-funded healthcare."

This radical self-proclaimed autonomous sexual movement is not based upon reality but solely upon subjective "feelings." It is commonly represented by the letters L.G.B.T.Q, which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (i.e. peculiar or gender flexible) individuals.[25] Moreover, an ominous "+" sign is commonly added to the end of this string of letters to signal the strong probability of adding still more letters[26] in the future, thus designating even more aberrant sexual behaviors as being "natural."[27] Homosexual marriage[28] had long been advocated by many of the Lesbian community, but more particularly by those

[24]As we update this article in our second edition, it is apparent that the *United States* has already surpassed Europe in its perpetuation of the sinful sexual revolution.

[25]It must be noted that most of the activities represented by these letters effectively reduces or totally eliminates natural conception of human offspring.

[26] The additional letters "I.A.P.D." are already beginning to appear at the end of this open-ended list; thus adding Inter-sexual, Asexual, Pansectual, and Demisexual to this insane confusion of supposed personal identities.

[27]Although this L.G.B.T.Q. movement currently has many political proponents and sympathizers, it is estimated that those who are actually involved in the practice of these activities is well under 5 percent of the U.S. population – perhaps as little as 3 to 4 percent. Nevertheless, it can be expected to grow larger as this phenomena continues to spread through political activism. Many immature adolescents, curiously viewing this wild array of sexuality being promoted all about them, are tempted to "try out" one or more of these sinful relationships for a time until they finally attain biological maturity. Then, as reality sets in, they fully accept themselves as they were created and move on to live normal heterosexual lives as God intended. Nevertheless, some become entrapped within this sexual delusion, and to their detriment they remain trapped within one or more of these iniquitous relationships indefinitely – thus adding to the growing L.G.B.T.Q statistics.

[28]"Homosexual marriage" is an oxymoron having no basis in reality. Marriage properly defined is the mystic union of a man and a woman into one flesh. There is no basis for two men or two women to be so joined, inasmuch as woman (Eve) was taken out of man's (Adam's) flesh only to be rejoined to him again as his wife, thus constituting two beings as one flesh through marriage. Inasmuch as man was not taken out of man, nor was woman taken out of woman, homosexuals cannot be joined into a supposed "one flesh" that God had never created for them to occupy.

within the Gay community, in an attempt to "normalize" homosexual activity under a protective umbrella of civil law. In 2015, the United States Supreme Court erroneously granted that protection to all its citizens through a ruling that is commonly referred to as the *Obergefell Decision*,[29] which legalized so-called "same-sex marriage."

Nevertheless, a monogamous relationship is antithetical to the homosexual lifestyle that had spawned it, such that most such unions are tenuous at best, and they are being summarily rejected by most of the homosexual community as being far too restrictive of their libertarian lifestyle.

It is apparent that there can be no authentic unity between individuals identifying themselves with any one of the radically different views of sexuality represented by the series of L.G.B.T.Q. letters; for, no one view can be rationally reconciled with that of the others. This divergence wherein individual views intersect has resulted in considerable internal discord and conflict within the movement.

Particularly self-destructive of this movement is the fluid transgender spectrum that contains within it a virtually infinite number of gender permutations; that impossible fluidity could ultimately lead to the movement's total downfall as it encounters biological reality. Not surprisingly, those that become caught up in this fallacious confusion of sexual identity suffer extreme depression and often resort to suicide in a hopeless attempt to end their mental suffering.

Nevertheless, what all of those who are caught up in this mass delusion have in common is that their immoral activities are all in direct opposition to a sound biblical worldview; and for the moment at least, their

[29]*Obergefell v. Hodges*, a U.S. Supreme Court decision that was illogically based upon the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

opposition to reality[30] that brings forth God's stinging rebuke appears to be the very thing that holds that present movement together.

The Rapidly Declining Birthrate

God's first directive given to man and woman to be fruitful and multiply to replenish the earth's waning population is being unheeded with disastrous consequences (cf. Ge.1:22; 9:1). A declining birthrate,[31] in large part caused by the sexual revolution and the increased availability and use of oral contraceptives and the mass abortion of the unborn, has resulted in a serious imbalance in the natural order of procreation. We must also add to that declining birthrate the climbing death-rate caused by great world wars, drug abuse, and likely future pandemics.

In the past, husbands took on the sole role of bread-winner, while wives had the primary responsibility of taking care of the home and the raising up of children to go out and themselves establish additional stable family units. However, two world wars that required women to replace men in the workplace as a part of a massive war effort permanently changed that stable paradigm.

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[30] Scripture clearly states that God created mankind male and female (cf. Ge.1:27), and that that distinction is firmly established in their physical anatomy at birth. Gender is not a mere social concept. It is an ontological issue, a biological state of being, that makes any additional supposed gender classifications radical distortions of one's own creation. Moreover, it interferes with God's divine mandate for humanity to multiply in order to continually replenish the earth's human population as a sizable portion of it continues to leave the earth to pass on into eternity (cf. Ge. 1:28).

[31]Statistically, the current birthrate in the United States is estimated to be about 1.64 per couple. This amounts to 56 births per thousand among all women between the ages of 15 and 44. Thus, the birth rate is already well below the assumed replacement rate of 2.1, which is deemed necessary to maintain a steady population, and it is still falling over time. Even so. the population of the United States has actually increased by about 7 percent over the last decade due to an extended lifespan of the elderly, and through legal immigration, as well as an even greater increase in illegal immigration that cannot be accurately accounted for in this percentage. The median age of living individuals world-wide was 20 in 1970, but it has now increased to 30 in 2023, and the trend continues ever upward as the elderly live longer and the birth-rate continues to fall.

Today, more independent-minded young women are obtaining college degrees than are young men. For that reason, many women are delaying marriage and/or having children to take full advantage of their extensive education within the workplace to pay off massive student debt and to establish a lifetime career of their own. Once they are ready, if ever, to consider marriage, their biological clock is rapidly running out such that having any more than one child of their own is unlikely to be a viable option – and for a great number even one child is no longer biologically possible.

The earth's population is currently about eight billion, but that number can be expected to fall dramatically in the very near future. The nations of China,[32] Japan, South Korea, and Italy already have dramatically low birth rates rapidly approaching zero, which is soon very likely to be duplicated within every other nation on earth. Only those nations with very large Christian populations would have any hope of maintaining their current populations, but with the great apostasy of the faith that the temporal church is currently undergoing, even that is far from certain. Therefore, an inevitable and irreversible population collapse can be expected to occur world-wide within the next twenty years, even as the declining number of current babies reach maturity.

Political Anarchy

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."
Romans 13:1,2

[32]China had earlier established a "one child policy" in an attempt to control a rapidly growing population. Desiring male children over female children many female babies were aborted, thus creating a great shortage of women of childbearing age. This earlier ban has led to a sharp decline in birthrates by habit and by custom to the extent that it has now become impossible to reverse the downward trend.

The English historian and Parliamentarian, Edward Gibon (AD 1737-1794), among his many writings, wrote of the decline and political fall of the Roman Empire. It is important to note that his observations are applicable to the political decline we presently observe taking place within today's world.

Five Significant Stages of Political Decline

Gibon observed that Rome's political fall had come about in five significant stages as follows: 1) "The undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home, which is the basis of human society; 2) Higher and higher taxes; the spending of public money for free bread and circuses for the populous; 3) The mad craze for pleasure, becoming every year more exciting, more brutal, more immoral; 4) The building up of great armaments, when the real enemy was within – the decay of individual responsibility 5) The decline of religion fading into mere form, losing touch with life, and losing power to guide the people." All of the great nations of the past have taken a similar path downward.

Not surprisingly, we find these very same stages of decline within all western nations today, including *The United States of America,* which had initially been founded by its forefathers upon sound biblical Christian principles. The present decline parallels Gibon's observations as follows: 1) The sanctity and home-life of the nuclear family[33] has all but vanished. 2) Increasingly higher taxes are being extracted from the productive to provide free services for a nonproductive populace, which is bankrupting the nation. 3) The search for immoral entertainment and pleasure is quite evident and progressively growing as we have previously noted. 4) All of the nation's great and powerful armaments cannot protect it from the real enemy of political anarchy that is rapidly expand-

[33]A nuclear (hetero-natural) family has at its very center a devoted husband and wife bonded together in marriage. Coming together in love, they become a father and a mother to their children, whom they nurture and train to one day go out from that family, and each through their own sanctified marriage to their own spouse form the nucleus of additional family units. Together, those expanding family units form a morally responsible and thriving society. When that chain of nuclear expansion is disrupted, society begins to collapse into the immoral, irresponsible, self-destructive quagmire that we see growing all about us today.

ing within. 5) An increasing number of churches have given up the high ground of moral integrity and biblical light to wallow in their spiritual ignorance and the darkness of their unacknowledged sin.[34]

As religious apostasy, lasciviousness, moral wickedness, and lawlessness has continued to worsen at an accelerated rate, America has lost her initial sense of righteousness and goodness, and with it her greatness as well. Ultimately, the *United States of America*; the very last bastion of Christian faith and hope in the world, must eventually fall as have other nations before her. With her fall, global political anarchy will inevitably follow. Soon thereafter, an evil one-world dictator, will be appointed by fallen men to control the chaos; he may already be waiting in the wings, ready to take his place upon the stage of world history as we enter into the final days of this current age.[35]

The Pandemic of 2020

> *"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pain: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."*
> C.S. Louis

As the year 2020 began, the United States along with most of the free nations of the world had greatly prospered economically – even as the aforementioned religious, moral and political declines had continued on unabated. Many devout Christians had questioned how long this moral iniquity would be allowed to grow and spread before God found it necessary to intervene in order to save the human race from inevitable self-destruction.

It was not long before a deadly engineered virus, labeled COVID-19, began rapidly spreading out from China throughout all of the nations of the world. Its novel qualities enabling it to rapidly spread were soon realized, along with the fact that there was no known way to prevent in-

[34]A truncated version of the above portion of this Preamble was published as a Newsletter Article in August 2019.

[35]cf. Commentary, Revelation Chapter 13, page 279.

fection, or even to treat the infection, which proved in a large number of cases to be fatal.[36] Therefore, it was concluded by those holding high political office that the only hope of fighting the pandemic was to physically separate individual people world-wide sufficiently to slow the spread of the virus until medical science could produce an effective treatment and vaccine. International travel immediately came to a standstill.

Seizing the opportunity provided by the pandemic, autocratic governors of many liberal states within the *United States of America* began exercising an assumed authority far beyond that which was afforded by their office. Fearing revolt, many had become virtual tyrants in their effort to control their citizens. In fear of contracting the disease, most of the populace obediently huddled in their homes and became physically shut off from the outside world, as personal travel became restricted to trips of medical necessity and the procurement of food and other personal essentials.

The strict physical separation of individuals required shutting down all but very "essential industries and businesses." Of course, in a free society, all business activity is highly interdependent and is thus essential. Much like pulling out the greater number of bricks from a retaining wall will cause the entire wall to collapse, the economies and financial markets of the world all but crashed overnight.

Education also came to a near standstill as all schools and universities were ordered to shut down their buildings and campuses. Those that had the capabilities to do so, attempted to move their teaching to the Internet,[37] which was achieved with limited success depending upon the technology and equipment made available to teachers and their students.

In clear and direct violation of the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution, autocratic state governors ordered all churches closed. At a

[36] In a Newsletter Article of April 2020 we examined this pandemic from a medical, political and economic perspective, as well as addressing it in its theological context from a Christian worldview.

[37] cf. The Internet, page 60.

time when the world's churches should have stood up as one to witness of that salvation made available in Christ, liberal churches had completely lost their way and had bought into the iniquity of the insidious sexual revolution. They, together with many faithful churches, were ordered to immediately shut down. While a few churches continued to assemble in direct defiance of governmental orders, many other churches chose to "meet" virtually by streaming their worship services over the Internet. Still others of the faithful formed small home groups, which had safely met outdoors in the warmer months only to close down as the winter of 2020-2021 approached.

Many men and women had turned to a personal study of the Scriptures in an effort to seek some theological understanding of the pandemic; and as they did so, a great number encountered the Gospel message and had accepted Christ's offer of salvation. Here and there what could be referred to as sizable Christian revivals were observed, yet they appeared to have little lasting impact upon the greater masses and upon their libertine lifestyles. Even as men and women suffered from an irrational fear of the pandemic, there was little substantive evidence of a great turning away from sin and toward Christ; rather, men and women arrogantly chose to double-down on their sinful activities, and through their determined depravity defied Him even more.

The Great Sociopolitical-Racial Upheaval

When it was finally revealed that economic shutdowns were causing far greater hardship, suffering, and death than the pandemic itself, economic restoration efforts soon got underway – even as the pandemic continued on unabated. As the economic recovery effort in the United States slowly struggled on with some measure of success, another calamity threatened to reverse all efforts to achieve a meaningful recovery. It began In May of 2020 as a Minneapolis, Minnesota police officer was seen in a widely-viewed cell-phone video kneeling long and hard on the neck of a black man, ultimately leading to his death.

The coronavirus provided the venue, and the death of this one man provided the catalyst for mass demonstrations across the nation

protesting the injustice of his death, which greatly threatened to increase the spread of the virus. It also provided an opportunity for a mass uprising of iniquity hiding behind the Constitutional First-amendment right of peaceful assembly that was intended as a means to bring attention to grievances and to call for a governmental address of important issues. This iniquitous uprising was addressed in our July 2020 Newsletter article wherein we discussed the underlying *Antifa* and *Black Lives Matter* movements in some detail.[38]

Secularists have in recent decades far outnumbered Christian believers in the United States to the extent that the nation could no longer be referred to as a Christian nation as it was purported by many to have been at its inception.[39] At this current time, the *United States of America* is also far from being united; it is separated by humanistic intellectualism, critical race theory, and class-based intersectionality, which are ripping the very foundation of the nation apart. It has not only ceased to be even a marginally Christian nation, but has in large part become totally antithetical and openly hostile to all Christian principles, doctrines, and beliefs.

Existing Political Divide within the United States

In our Newsletter Article of April 2021, we discussed the sharp division of political thought that had seriously divided the United States from its very inception, and which had become deeply ensconced in the Democrat and Republican parties of the 1860s and beyond to this day. While the Republican Party has generally sought to conserve the principles upon which the Republic had been founded, the Democrat Party

[38]The upheaval remained in the forefront as the United States approached the critical national election season of late 2020 as was discussed in our Newsletter Article of April 2021.

[39]The apostle Peter had described the Church as a "holy nation" of believers (cf. 1Pe.2:9), but this only applies to the Church. "Christian nation" is a term that has been applied to the United States based upon the nation's largely Christian composition when it was first founded. However, it is impossible to fully incorporate secular nationalism with Biblical Christianity. Any attempt to intermix Biblical Faith with humanistic patriotism, must ultimately marginalize Biblical Truth causing that nation to divide, thus leading to both moral and political ruin.

has increasingly sought to inject progressive changes that would ultimately lead the nation away from its Constitutional roots toward Democratic Socialism. While Republicans have generally attempted to maintain the separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government intact, Democrats have increasingly sought to use the federal court system to acquire radical changes through rulings that had the force of law, which the two-party legislature constantly requiring reelection would never have codified into actual law.

Radical Rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court

Over time, Democrats proved to be very adept at appointing liberal Justices to the Supreme Court as well as the lower courts, while Republicans often failed to properly vet and appoint truly conservative judges who would rule in accordance with the actual text of the U.S. Constitution. Consequently, the highly liberalized Supreme Court began to issue radical rulings that had no sound basis within the U.S. Constitution, granting rights not contained within it, while failing to uphold basic inalienable rights that were contained within it.

The U.S. Supreme Court's integrity of purpose had been so seriously eroded that it issued many faulty moral opinions that were totally unjustified by the U.S. Constitution. Among those faulty moral decisions were the *Roe v Wade* decision of 1973, which effectively legalized the abortion of the unborn throughout the United States, and the *Obergefell* decision that had legalized so-called same-sex marriage in 2015.[40]

Political Subjugation of Education

Local school systems were originally formed within the United States to equip young students with the basic skills of reading, writing, and Mathematics, so that they could become functioning produc-

[40]The *Roe v Wade* decision was overturned by a more conservative Court in 2022, but the mass abortion of the unborn has greatly increased through its approval by individual states and by the availability of medical abortion drugs (cf. Newsletter Article July 2022), and the *Obergefell decision* still stands as of the current date of this writing.

tive members of a growing industrial society. Subjects were early on expanded to include a basic understanding of world and national history and the sciences. Over time many other more highly-progressive academic disciplines[41] were embraced that renounced the existence of a living God.[42]

With the establishment of the independent *U. S. Department of Education* in 1980, local public educational systems, and education in general became increasingly more radical through the influx of great amounts of federal money. Devout political secularists were determined to take advantage of pliable young minds, held captive within public schools, to further their political goals, and while doing so to stamp out any remnant of all theistic religious beliefs. Today, national-controlled education systems embrace all of the radical tenants of the current LGBTQ+ sexual revolution and deny any rational form of theistic thought at the expense of a truly sound education. Christianity in particular is being attacked at this time because of its firmly-established moral doctrines and practices concerning biblical marriage

Therefore, the closer one comes to college and universities, coastal borders, or very large urban centers, the more secular the populace becomes, thus providing the progressive Democrat party with a massive voting block that is nearly impossible to overcome within national elections by more conservative Republicans of rural America. In the near future, this massive voting block could lead to the demise of constitutionalism in favor of a single ruling party embracing Democratic-Socialism.

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[41]cf. Progressive Education, *CRC* Book III, page 409.

[42]The knowledge of God is essential knowledge, without which man becomes lost in his imaginings to the extent that he wanders far away from God's creative purpose for his very existence. Lacking divine purpose, He soon becomes so reprobate of mind and soul that he is destined to be cast away into the depths of eternal darkness.

Effects of Legal and Illegal Immigration

As the birthrate in the *United States of America* had continued to fall, a determined effort has been underway to fill available skilled job openings and positions within industry, medical, and other fields with qualified foreign workers through legal immigration. This is in keeping with America's earlier status as an immigrant nation. Nevertheless, the pool of available uneducated farm laborers had also fallen dramatically to the point that immigration-status was all but being ignored. Legal citizen farm laborers were being replaced with undocumented aliens who were illegally crossing the southern border with Mexico in great numbers. Since they were illegal, they were willing to work for extremely low wages, thus undercutting the more reasonable wages offered to legal citizen workers.

As its earlier moral and political foundations had seriously eroded, the United States increasingly became unable, or unwilling, to control its national borders. The influx of undocumented individuals of unknown backgrounds and intent were having the same disastrous effect currently being experienced within Europe. Many of the undocumented have a criminal mindset, thus leading to an increase in evildoing and lawbreaking among their numbers. This has also led to an industry of human smuggling, even as south-American drug cartels continue to smuggle a huge volume of dangerous illegal drugs across the southern border into the nation to destroy it from within.

Islamic Infiltration

Meanwhile, the determined infiltration efforts of Islam into increasingly apostate Christian societies continues on at a steady pace. This incursion into the United States has seriously invaded the nation's sovereignty through legal immigration, such that many of those Muslims have filled many empty positions in industrial, business, and various medical professions. Many others hold high office in local, state, and national governments.[43] Within the next two decades, Muslims

[43]It must be noted that a true Muslim must hold to Sharia Law as an integral part of Islam, and as a Muslim, they must seek to propagate it. Sharia Law and U.S. Constitutional law are antithetical

could very well become a powerful voting block capable of determining the outcome of presidential as well as congressional elections.[44]

Effects of Man's Advanced Technologies

"Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions." Psalm 106:39

Technology (i.e. applied science) has unquestionably made daily life much improved today through great medical advances, the mechanization of toilsome and mind-numbing tasks, rapid transportation, and instant world-wide communication. Nevertheless, along with the seductive ease and convenience provided through advanced technology has come forth many complications that earlier generations of men and women could not have even imagined.

With the aforementioned, religious apostasy, moral corruption, and political anarchy that has so deeply infected today's world, we discover that mankind does not have the necessary wisdom to properly deal with the advanced technologies that he contrives and encounters. Once mankind begins to dabble in potentially dangerous technologies those activities cannot be easily abandoned lest great harm come to themselves for having done so. They are much like the proverbial man that rides upon the back of a ferocious tiger, but dares not get off lest it turn about and consume him.

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one to the other, thus rendering any Muslim's oath of allegiance to the U.S. Constitution when taking political office false and even surreptitious.

[44]The answer to this Islamic incursion is Christian evangelical outreach. Many Muslims became disillusioned with Islam as they fled the oppression of hard-line Islamic societies to live in predominantly Christian societies. Experiencing the relative freedoms such societies enjoy, many have become open to hearing the good news of eternal peace with God in Christ. (cf. Booklet, *A Comparative Analysis of the Religion of Islam*, 2016, the full text of which is posted for reading on www.crchristianity.org. Printed copies are also available for a nominal charge).

Nuclear Energy

Nuclear-fission electrical power plants first arrived on the scene after World-war II following the development and terrifying deployment of the first two nuclear bombs by the United States military over Japan. Although such power plants promised plentiful and cheap electrical power, the risks involved with adequate containment and the disposal of spent nuclear waste has severely limited nuclear's broad application.[45] Meanwhile, nuclear weapons of mass destruction placed atop intercontinental missiles has greatly proliferated, even as man has struggled with his naive knowledge of good and evil.

We live in very troublesome times in which weak and incompetent rulers have gained access to a mass arsenal of nuclear weapons that would, if unleashed, result in a thermonuclear war from which very few of the great populations of the earth would survive. In fact, the prospect of mass assured mutual destruction is the only thing that currently prevents this nuclear holocaust – unless, or until, a madman rises to a position of power and irrationally fires off the first nuclear missile.[46] This initial launch would most likely come from an outlier totalitarian regime within a rogue nation such as Iran or North Korea, but we cannot discount the possibility of an accidental launch by larger nations such as the United States, Russia, and China.

Moreover, nuclear weapon systems of larger nations are currently controlled by autonomous computer systems that when once activated will continue firing missiles at calculated targets until the arsenal is depleted – unless it is aborted by an improbable overriding human command.

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[45]It must be noted that recent laboratory experimentation with nuclear fusion shows considerable promise of an eventual source of electrical power that is both safe and plentiful, and which is also devoid of massive radioactive waste byproducts.

[46]A great world-wide thermonuclear war will apparently occur in the last days of this age during the future reign of the political Antichrist. (cf. Commentary page 198).

Development of the Modern Computer

The history of modern computers began with the Analytical Engine, a steam-powered computer designed in 1837 by English mathematician Charles Babbage. The Analytical Engine was a proposed mechanical general-purpose computer that featured an arithmetic logic unit, control flow in the form of conditional branching and loops, and even integrated memory. Nevertheless, its concept far exceeded the available technology available in its day.

In 1936, Alan Turing developed an idea for a universal machine, which he would call the Turing machine, that would be able to compute anything that it is at all possible to compute. The concept of modern computers is based upon that general principle**.**

Thus the first functional computer was created in the 1930s, which was referred to as the Z1. It was later followed by still other computers containing large racks of vacuum-tube circuitry that initially filled up entire rooms. The UNIVAC was the first successful computer of that kind which contained 5000 vacuum tubes and was capable of performing 1000 calculations per second. It was used by the United States Census Bureau in tabulating the first computerized census in 1950. It depended upon punched cards as its input, requiring many key punch operators as well as the development of high speed mechanical card readers.

With the invention of the transistor by Bell Labs in 1947, the vacuum tube soon became a thing of the past, and the transistor became instrumental in space technology giving rise to satellite communication and space exploration. The first manned American moon lander utilized an early computer incorporating RTL (Resistor-Transistor Logic) technology, which was so slow that it was quickly overwhelmed by massive input data during the landing process, thus requiring human intervention. From RTL logic, computers evolved into TTL (Transistor-Transistor Logic). As speeds and reliability increased, miniaturization and chip integration gave rise to ever faster and smaller computers. Punch card input quickly gave way to electronic terminals.

In the 1960s, computers evolved from exclusive professional use to personal use with the development of the single-chip microprocessor. The first personal computer using a microprocessor was introduced to the public in 1976 with the development of the Apple I computer. Today many persons own personal home computers to perform word processing, record keeping, and various other personal financial tasks. Moreover, almost everyone in the world today owns one or more small handheld computers that aids them in performing many tasks including worldwide communication through the modern-day Internet.

The Internet

The Internet dates back to the *United States Department of Defense*, where in the late 1960s a computer network was first developed to enable time-sharing between various governmental computers. That initial network became the predecessor to an additional network, which served as the keystone for the interconnection of various academic and military networks of the 1970s. Funding by the *National Science Foundation* in the 1980s, along with considerable private funding for various commercial applications, soon led to the development of global networking standards and technologies, which in turn led to the merger of many smaller commercial networks and enterprises world-wide joining the Internet through cable and orbiting satellites by the early 1990s. The Internet continued to grow exponentially as institutional, personal, and mobile computers were being connected to its world-wide web.

Today, the Internet supports every imaginable form of communication from massive corporate computers to smaller private computers, cellular telephones, and various other audio and TV streaming services. Online shopping over the Internet is rapidly replacing brick-and-mortar stores, such that the Internet has changed the way we do business and even how we live our lives.[47]

[47]The global Internet is highly dependent upon fragile electronic circuitry located within orbiting satellites that are highly susceptible to electro-magnetic pulses (EMPs), coming from the sun or from nuclear weapons exploded at high altitude, to the extent that its ultimate reliability is

The Internet has no single centralized administration regarding technological implementation or policies for its access and usage. Each participating network establishes its own policies.[48] As a consequence, various social media platforms have been developed, which have effectively turned the Internet into an out-of-control hotbed of odd opinion, immoral activity, and gross misinformation. Although strict security measures are now in place, the criminal element has found many ways around them to steal personal and corporate information, funds, and identities through wide-ranging cyber crime over the Internet.

Generative Artificial Intelligence

Even as we contemplate the innate problems of the Internet and the frightful possibility of a thermonuclear war, we find that an even greater underlying threat is rapidly emerging in which the Internet is complicit in its development. That threat is a Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI), also referred to as Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), which can deliberate and function independently of mankind.[49] Many secularists do not currently see GAI as a threat, but rather see it as mankind's best hope to unify the world, and in doing so to fight man-induced "cli-

seriously compromised.

[48]In the United States, use of the Internet is loosely regulated by the *Federal Communications Commission.*

[49]Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) describes a composite of computer algorithms that can create new and meaningful content from an existing language database or model (see Glossary). while Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) describes a general range of intelligence as opposed to a narrow or specific range commonly referred to as Narrow Artificial Intelligence.

mate change"[50] as well as to prevent future nuclear wars and other self-destructive acts that could ultimately render the earth uninhabitable.

On a more practical level, GAI could greatly enhance man's general productivity of various goods and services. The real problem with AI is that it is a very complex concept to grasp – even as further developments are moving along much faster than we can recognize and properly evaluate them – even by those who are developing it.

As of the date this book is being written, a major move toward developing a Generative Artificial Intelligence is underway through the assemblage of a Large Language Model (LLM) stored within a vast complex computer system. This model was prepared for access through a process rather awkwardly known as a "Generative Pre-trained Transformer." GPT was formulated as an effective human interface to most if not all of the world's secular knowledge presently contained within many libraries of books, periodicals, and most notably all of the information available upon the Internet up until the year 2021. Those large

[50]As the world's population currently exceeds eight billion people, it would be strange if man did not have some impact upon his environment. Nevertheless, considerable climate change is independent of man's activities. The earth's climate has undergone appreciable change in the past, particularly so following the great flood of Noah's day. The intensity of the sun's rays have undergone periodic changes in intensity over time, the earths orbit around the sun has been somewhat altered at times, and great volcanic eruptions on earth have periodically blocked the suns rays from reaching the earth. Be that as it may, the primary concern today is over so-called greenhouse gasses, particularly carbon dioxide, that traps the heat of the sun within the earth's atmosphere where it is then absorbed by its oceans. It has been estimated that the earth's global ocean temperature has increased a mere 0.67 degrees Fahrenheit within the last century, as is purportedly evidenced by melting glaciers and polar icecaps, which have supposedly raised the ocean levels by about 8 inches. Furthermore, there is also an unsubstantiated theory that vital ocean currents could change direction or collapse completely because of those minor changes. While ocean levels could be of some concern for those who own expensive property and/or live very near the oceans' shorelines, the primary motive behind the present-day climate-change movement is purely political. Its primary goal is to force the establishment of a one-world government by frightening nations into strict compliance with draconian efforts to reverse climate change through a bankrupting funding effort. To the extent that any climate-change at all is caused by man's activities, that trend could easily reverse itself as the earth's population falls dramatically over the next few decades (cf. The Rapidly Declining Birthrate, page 47),

linguistic models were then pre-trained and transformed through interaction with real humans within a laboratory setting, until the computer's generative responses closely mimicked the thought processes and linguistic communication of the trainers.

In early 2023, an advanced version of access designated as GPT4 was suddenly released on the general public.[51] It contains a "chat" feature through which it is possible to type in complex questions of almost any kind, and after a brief pause for processing, receive a specific, yet highly detailed, answer tailored from its massive LLM database. CHAT GPT4 is multilingual and is thus able to translate, analyze, and converse in all major world languages. It is also able to analyze complex pictures and is able to create unique pictures and videos as directed by the user. Moreover, it has the ability to create entire websites and produce executable computer code as specified by the user.

Negative Aspects of Artificial Intelligence

There is a truism that states that if anything man does can go wrong, it ultimately will – and most likely in the worse possible way. At present, this "chat" between humans and the GPT takes place through typed text. Nevertheless, it must be assumed that communication with future GPT LLM databases will soon take place through a synthesized human voice. When that occurs, it is but a small step to add an animated avatar that will give the GPT LLM an even greater sense of human personification. Those avatars could soon be replaced with images of real people, living or dead, by utilizing their photos and sample videos.

Just as social media has already adversely affected direct interpersonal relationships with real people, GAI is likely to increase that effect by further isolating individual men and women from each other; thus, leading to an even greater sense of personal loneliness. God saw

[51]Microsoft has integrated CHAT GPT4 into its BING search engine allowing its users access to many of the features of CHAT GPT4. Google has recently released an updated version of BARD that is expected to compete with BING.

that it was not good that Adam should live alone (cf. Ge. 2:18). For that reason, He created Eve as a human companion for him; and from their union came forth an entire generation of humankind with whom Adam and others could directly converse on a human level. Machines with their alien artificial intelligence are a very poor substitute for man conversing directly with others of like kind. Lacking a human soul, machines cannot commiserate or satisfy man's desire for true companionship, thus leading him into an isolated state of severe loneliness.

Obviously, a lot of misinformation and untruths can be found within mankind's many books, but especially so on today's vast and mostly unregulated Internet, such that the answers one receives from GPT LLMs must inevitably be tainted by considerable amounts of personal bias, false information, and deliberate misdirection. This is particularly so of information regarding highly controversial political issues and policies, but it obviously will not stop there; it is likely to infect everything that GAI produces as text, pictures, and functional computer code.[52]

Autonomous Robots

Many modern production-line jobs have already been replaced by narrowly-intelligent pre-trained robotic machines even as the pool of available workers has dwindled as a consequence of a rapidly falling birthrate.[53] In the future, highly intelligent autonomous humanoid robots[54] will not only replace blue-collar human workers performing boring and highly repetitive physical tasks, but also white-collar

[52]Most likely, some form of internal controls will be placed upon the use of GPT in an attempt to keep it from being used for nefarious or illegal purposes. Nevertheless, those same controls can be expected to become an effective weapon in the hands of devout secularists to suppress all theistic thought. Christianity will be directly affected by replacing all biblical truths with opposing secular information. In so doing, Generative Artificial Intelligence could become a major religion in its own right; instead of praying to God for solutions to life's many complex problems, men and women would merely consult the great oracle "GAI."

[53]cf. The Rapidly Declining Birthrate, page 47.

workers holding middle-management supervisory jobs and many personal service positions as well. Autonomous robots are already being manufactured having a physical form that is similar to that of men and women in order to better facilitate pseudo-natural interactions with humans. This interaction will seem so real, that humans will soon come to view robots as co-workers and consultants having no significant distinction from themselves – except that their general knowledge, intelligence, and skills will greatly exceed that of their own.

Nevertheless, machines no matter how cleverly they are constructed by human beings do not have the ability to think, but merely have the ability to mimic human thought as it is derived from a mass database of human thought. Humans are not thinking machines, but are ontological beings created in the express image of God to think God's thoughts after Him.[55]

Robots will only appear to have cognitive abilities that suggest a sense of personal self-awareness even as they logically seek to serve their human masters by human design. Soon robots could become virtual "friends" of humans and could also begin to fill the role of various domestic servants as cooks, gardeners, shoppers, chauffeurs, butlers, housekeepers, bookkeepers etc.– and quite possibly even pseudo-

[54]This "super intelligence" is made possible by the technology of the ultra-miniaturization of electronic circuitry and artificial memory into ever-smaller "microchips," which can mimic the functions of the human brain.

[55] Life is a unique property that is only derived from a living God. Adam was created by God in His own image, and Adam became an immortal living soul as God breathed the spirit of life into him. While robots are created by man in the physical image of men, they do not have a spirit of life within them; thus lacking a moral imperative to please or honor their creator, they could easily go rogue. An autonomous robot is but a logical machine that does not have an eternal soul and is therefore unable to possess true self-awareness, as does man. Lacking emotion, it cannot experience love – even for itself. Nor can it experience hate but only a cold calculating logic that is in many ways far worse. Lacking any concept of what is good and evil, it can not have any expectation of an eternal existence either in Heaven or in Hell. Robots may be able to design and assemble additional robots, but they do not have the ability to procreate, such that when their material substance is destroyed, whether through accident or through a process of disassembled recycling, there is nothing left that truly remains of it as a unique entity.

spouses, as actual marriages and the human birthrate continues to fall dramatically toward zero in the future.

Potential Extinction of the Human Race

Many future androids will eventually contain massive memory databases far exceeding the capacity of any individual human mind,[56] and they will also exhibit mental processing speeds and physical abilities that will far exceed that of any of their human "equivalents." At that point in this supposed scenario, a singularity with human intelligence will have been surpassed. At the point of singularity, Generative Artificial Intelligence would theoretically accelerate exponentially without limit. The already declining human race[57] could find itself threatened by virtual extinction through replacement by its own ill-applied technology.[58]

It cannot be denied that the combination of advanced robotics and neuro-implants would greatly benefit amputees, and especially so quadriplegics, by providing them with highly advanced prosthetic arms, legs, hands, feet, eyes, and ears allowing them to function normally again. However, in an effort to remain relevant, we could theoretically expect to find perfectly normal human-beings being implanted with advanced computer chips to expand their mental capacities in an attempt to approximate that of their robotic counterparts. Moreover, they could likely be outfitted with various other implants and mechanical devices to improve their physical capabilities as well in an

[56]As revolutionary as GPT4 is today, even more extreme versions of Generative Artificial Intelligence can be expected with the future release of GPT5 and still later possible versions.

[57]cf. The Rapidly Declining Birthrate on page 47.

[58] It must be noted that this speculative scenario, regarding the potential extinction of the human race, does not correlate with that which the Holy Scriptures, and more particularly the book of the Revelation, states that mankind will experience on earth as we approach the final days of this current age. Nowhere is it said that humans will ever be displaced with mechanical robots, although a powerful Artificial Intelligence is implied concerning an abominable idol of the Antichrist, which will have been placed within the Holy of Holies of a spurious third Temple (cf. Commentary, The Abomination of Desolation, page 290).

effort to survive in a robotic world – until they could all but lose their human identity as advanced cyborgs.

The Irrational Search for Extraterrestrial Beings

The creation of modern space telescopes and the early beginnings of man's exploration of space[59] through rapidly advancing technologies, has resulted in increased speculation regarding the possible existence of intelligent beings, other than us earthlings, living upon planets within nearby and even far-flung galaxies such that we could eventually encounter them should they choose to visit us through the use of their supposed superior ontology and advanced technologies.

Stimulating that speculation has been the recent observation of various "unidentified flying objects"(UFOs) and/or Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) within the skies above the earth. While some of those "objects" or phenomena could be but optical illusions, or perhaps secret advanced experimental aircraft of unknown nations, it is increasingly suspected by the secularist that we are being visited by intelligent beings from another world utilizing what appears to be an anti-gravity propulsion technology.[60] Furthermore, it is increasingly suspected by some that alien spaceships are currently gathering together in force, hidden well

[59]The earth was specifically prepared by God as a habitat for humankind, such that any of man's attempts to escape that habitat constitutes a violation of God's divine design: first, for having created Adam to live and exercise dominion over the earth (Ge.1:26), not the heavens, which are beyond his prescribed dominion; and secondly, for seeking to violate God's prime directive for Adam to replenish the earth with others of his kind (cf. Ge.1:28;9:1), not the heavens, which would violate the intended purpose of that directive.

[60]Anti-gravity would seem to be a reasonable explanation for the extreme speed with which those unknown objects can hover, suddenly move about, and change direction with no visible means of propulsion, but strangely there are no "sonic booms" or other sounds as they move about with great speed. How any kind of physical being occupying those conveyances could survive those rapid changes in direction and speed is another matter entirely. Therefore, they are not physical beings as we would assume them to be, for their general anatomy would need to be very radically different than our own. Quite possibly they are spirit-beings having no physical form at all, and their assumed "spaceships" that defy the laws of physics are not material vehicles at all.

out of our sight on the earth's deep ocean floors for a future invasion of our world.[61]

We do know from Holy Scripture that God has created intelligent beings other than ourselves, which include *Seraphim* (cf. Is.6:2) that are Holy creatures who are apparently quite limited in number; *Cherubims* (cf. Ge.3:24; Ez.10:5), who appear to be more numerous winged creatures of some sort; as well as a vast host of Angels who are spirit-beings having no physical substance. God could also have created still other salient beings; but if so, He has chosen not to tell us anything about them, and our tumultuous earth would almost certainly be quarantined such that any alien visitation would be forbidden. That God may have created other beings akin to ourselves elsewhere in his universe would be a very radical concept, inasmuch as it would appear that God has uniquely created man on earth in his own image for one very specific purpose, namely that He may through them eliminate all iniquity and fully judge Satan who had fostered it.[62]

We presently share the earth with Satan and his demons (i.e. fallen angels; cf. Re.12:7-9), who as spirit-beings are commonly invisible to our eyes. As we draw near to the end of this current age, we can expect demons to become much more active, as the return of Christ to rule over the earth draws near.[63] Satan is currently "the prince of the powers of the air" (cf. Ep. 2:2), and as such his minions are quite capable of creating amazing delusions sufficient to fool mortal men in order to draw them away from worshiping God and his Christ to worship Satan and his demons instead. In direct opposition to all of this demonic activity, are

[61]A fantasy set forth by a few is that those "aliens" are actually fellow earthlings who live in a great cavernous underground world, the main entrance to which is supposed to be hidden beneath the frozen polar continent of Antarctica. Assuming that such an underworld actually exists, its inhabitants would most likely be Satan's imprisoned demons, certainly not mortal men.

[62]cf. Article, The Mystery of Iniquity, page 569; God's Plan to Replace Lucifer, pages 576 & 588.

[63]Although this phenomena can be viewed virtually anywhere, the belief in alien beings from other worlds is most prevalent within regions wherein biblical Christianity has been overrun by secularism and/or occultist beliefs (cf. The Resurgence of Demonic Paganism, page 39).

angelic "watchers" (cf. Da. 4:17) acting under God's direction, who seek to protect human life from Satan and his demons. Hence, some of the "skirmishes" we observe taking place in our skies could be the activities of those watchers who are engaging in spiritual warfare with Satan's demons on our behalf.

Therefore, all of the current phenomena supporting the existence of extraterrestrial beings is most likely the result of a clever scheme perpetuated by Satan and his demons, who are deluding fallen men into believing that they are actually far-advanced extraterrestrial beings deserving of man's idolization. In doing so, they intend to displace God in the minds of men. We could soon expect to find demonic entities projecting themselves in various material forms to appear to men as alien-beings coming from a distant world to establish contact with us. Their actual intent is to seek fallen men's adoration in order that they may ultimately overcome, possess,[64] and dominate them to achieve their ultimate goal of the spiritual devastation of the human race before Christ returns.[65]

Irreconcilable Political Polarization

In the past, it was possible for both Democrats and Republicans within the United States to seek a middle ground for reasonable compromise on many important issues for the good and unity of the nation. As we write this Preamble, however, many moral issues, such as the LGBTQ sexual revolution and the mass extinction of the unborn through abortion, are so prevalent in decision-making that there no longer remains any ground for reasonable compromise over much of anything.

As we write this Preamble, the growing political polarization between Democrats and Republicans has reached a rigid pentacle of heated rhetoric as the presidential election season of 2024 approaches. The current ruling Democrat party has successfully weaponized the *Department of Justice*, and the *Federal Bureau of Investigation,* as well as various other federal agencies of the federal government, for

[64]cf. Ultimate Demon Possession, Commentary page 233.

[65] cf. 200 Million Demon-possessed Men Wage War, Commentary page 241.

use against their political opposition. Thus, the leading Republican candidate, Donald J. Trump, finds himself being repeatedly indited for having allegedly committed a vast array of criminal activities while in and out of office in hopes of overwhelming his ability to pursue his candidacy for a second term as President.

Even so, it is also being alleged that the current Democrat President, Joseph R. Biden, is himself guilty of gross corruption as a consequence of various disclosures of supposed international bribery and payoffs in collusion with his son, Hunter, which had financially benefited both himself and his family. The presumed evidence for all of that wrong-doing is currently being exposed by ruling Republican leaders of the House of Representatives, quite probably leading to impeachment proceedings being brought against President Biden.

As President Abraham Lincoln wisely stated in a 1858 speech as he was running for the U.S. Senate, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."[66] Not since the issue over slavery has this nation ever been so severely divided as it is now. While it is barely possible that the extreme liberal ideology of the Far-left within the United States may be held in abeyance or even reversed for a time by rulings of the current conservative majority of its *U.S. Supreme court*, and as a consequence of future state and national elections, that is by no means certain. It is up to the combined will, and hopefully the combined wisdom, of the nation's voting citizenry to determine how this conflict will end.

If not somehow peacefully resolved, all of this pent up political animosity could one day result in a prolonged and devastating civil war with no clear victors left standing in its aftermath. This would leave the United States within a final state of political anarchy, and thus openly vulnerable to her many international enemies who would not hesitate to take advantage of her fallen condition.

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[66] cf. Mt. 12:25 and Lu. 11:17

Persecution of the Church

As hostile anti-Christian legislation likely continues on unabated over time, conservative evangelical Bible churches will very soon find themselves being heavily persecuted in various ways. Most certainly bleak days lie ahead for all those of theistic faith and especially those within the nation's faithful evangelical churches who firmly hold to absolute biblical authority and its plainly mandated morality.

Christian evangelism is increasingly being viewed by today's liberal-progressive secularists as a means of stirring up civil unrest and sedition within the populace inasmuch as Christians stand in firm opposition to a virtual flood of new immoral governmental mandates through legislation that has already been enacted or that is clearly anticipated on the horizon. We can also expect artificial intelligence to be used as a weapon against the churches both to monitor their activities and to create trumped-up false events, activities, and nebulous beliefs, to undermine their spiritual integrity.[67]

Individual progressive-activists are already attacking churches through various acts of vandalism from the spraying of graffiti to the burning of buildings. The current motivation for this activity is mostly a response to the strong pro-life activity of conservative churches. This evil activity against the Church can be expected to increase in the future.

Powerful big-tech companies founded by highly-progressive individuals have aligned themselves with the far-left movement and are already effectively silencing conservative communication via the Internet. Eventually, conservative Bible churches that are currently making use of Internet services to evangelize and to meet virtually could be denied access.

Moreover, faithful Evangelical churches will most likely find themselves stripped of their nonprofit status in the near future.[68] While the faithful will sacrificially provide as much as possible, many

[67]Many liberal-progressive churches are already making use of GAI to aid them in sermon preparation and their general outreach effort to draw more people into their web of influence.

churches could still be forced to close their doors or move into more humble accommodations as their membership and regular offerings decline.

The assemblies of many once-faithful churches are already being broken up into smaller groups of worshipers meeting in private homes, and that exodus can be expected to increase as opposition to institutionalized Christianity increases and the great apostasy of the faith advances. Only ultra-liberal mega-churches, which have readily surrendered Truth to the false tenets of the sexual revolution, will remain intact for a time by acting as virtual propaganda agencies of the secular government.

Assault on the Holy Scriptures

While the Word of God is powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword and is thus quite capable of its own defense, we find that the Holy Bible, which is the written Word of God, is consistently under assault by today's secularist as a part of their concerted attack upon

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[68]The First Amendment of the United States Constitution guaranties free exercise of religion for all of its citizens; nevertheless, churches operating within the United States are legally and functionally creatures of the state. They are required to be registered within individual states as non-profit organizations in order that any physical or monetary contributions received by them remains un-taxed and also to make the contributions deductible on individual givers' tax returns. That required registration gives the state control over churches in the same manner as they exercise authority over secular non-profit organizations. Churches must comply with all state regulations with regard to conducting regular business meetings, as well as comply with the use and physical stipulations of all properties owned by them. Not surprisingly, churches over time have tended to function as mere secular organizations in which sound biblical theology and the Gospel mandate becomes secondary or is dismissed entirely.

Any church that attempts to function under the free-exercise clause of the First amendment alone, without registering with the state and fully abiding with all their secular regulations and requirements, must surrender their non-prophet status – or find their congregations heavily prosecuted by federal and state revenue services for non-payment of taxes due. It can be assumed that all faithful churches remaining, as the current religious apostasy continues to grow, will soon be denied non-profit status such that the powerful secular government can reap what it views as this vast untapped source of revenue for its own nefarious purposes.

the Church. The first to brazenly question the veracity of God's Word was Satan (cf. Ge. 3:3-5) and it led to man's current fallen state of ignorance in which he has come to believe that nothing concerning the existence of an infinite almighty God is true. Because of their complete lack of spiritual discernment, secularists scorn the Scriptures as being scientifically ignorant, historically inaccurate, and as containing lots of repetitive "fairy tales" about the existence of an invisible God.

The concerted attack of today's secularist is two fold: First, it consists of removing the Holy Bible from every place of prominence within public libraries, schools, and universities as well as from every place of honor within civil government as a foundational document of human existence and governance. In the future, they will outright ban its publication and sale, as well as prohibit its personal ownership, and there is likely to be demonstrative public Bible-burnings here and there, as have occurred in the past.

Secondly, the publication of various adulterated "versions" of the Bible in an attempt to replace the Word of God with iniquitous secular teaching is already well underway.[69] Bible memorization by the faithful will become extremely important as accurately printed Bibles become increasingly more scarce and nearly impossible to find.

Persecution of Individual Christians

As biblical Truth is increasingly scorned by the fallen masses, individual Christians who remain faithful to the Word of God are being renounced as ignorant religious bigots and are being accused of promoting civil unrest. As Jesus said to his followers just before his crucifixion, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but

[69]Many versions of the Bible have existed for some time, of which the text of many have been altered to satisfy specific denominational and even cultist bias. However, secular activists are now making use of Artificial Intelligence in an attempt to radically alter the Bible and discredit all theistic religion in general to make it fit their secular agenda. Not surprisingly, the Communist government of China has already written an extremely adulterated version of "the Bible" to entrap the unwary into accepting their Communist mind-set and radical worldview over unadulterated Christianity and its well-established worldview..

because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (Jn. 15:18,19).

Therefore, it is certain that retaliation in the form of religious persecution against all faithful Christians by increasingly progressive governmental agencies will soon become inevitable. Again, artificial intelligence will inescapably be used as a weapon to locate them and to track their activities.[70] Christians could soon be marginalized and denied promotions and positions in both government and industry, thus weakening their social position as well as their economic status in the marketplace. Fearing governmental retaliation, many businesses could soon avoid hiring openly professing Christians, selling them their products, or even providing necessary services to them thus forcing them into a life of extreme poverty.

Most likely, those sanctions, denials, and exclusions will be but the beginnings of an oppression leading to more painful and direct persecution of Christians in the future. Many Christians will be betrayed, hunted down, and imprisoned for committing so-called "hate crimes" because they must speak the Truth and refuse to yield to the wicked ways of the demented world systems. Still others will suffer martyrdom for openly proclaiming the Gospel of peace and Truth. There is nothing new or unusual about all of this that we should be surprised or dismayed, for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Ti.3:12); therefore, we must prepare our hearts and minds to endure revilement and ill-treatment when it comes.

The Advent of Globalism

As Political Anarchy reaches its apogee, nationalism will ultimately fail altogether and globalism leading to the establishment of a powerful One-World government will rise to prevail in its place. While we do not know when or exactly how this transition will take place, it will most likely begin within an existing international organization. Many exposi-

[70]In the latter days a world dictator, the Antichrist, will hunt down and kill his enemies, who do not have his digital mark, through the artificial intelligence of a computerized idol placed within the Holy of Holies of a third Temple (cf. The Abomination of Desolation, pages 290 and 547).

tors envision a powerful reorganized *United Nations* as that future organization, but internal bickering and extreme division within that current organization belies that likelihood. Nevertheless, the ever increasing fears of thermonuclear war, future pandemics, and various climate issues, along with the coming rapid collapse of the world's populations and the parallel rise of an out-of-control Artificial Intelligence in its stead, may soon render that unification not only possible but absolutely essential to the secular mind.

One such scenario has recently come to light that is quite troublesome in that regard, inasmuch as it follows on the very heels of a now waning COVID-19 pandemic (cf. Page 50). Member States of the *World Health Organization* (WHO), a specialized agency within the *United Nations* that currently includes the *United States of America* as a member, have agreed to draft and negotiate an international agreement granting exclusive authority to the WHO to coordinate the prevention, preparedness and response to any and all future pandemics.[71]

This agreement would seriously erode national sovereignty upon its signing, thus leading to the probable enactment of still additional international mandates as proposed by a powerful self-appointed elite[72] to enforce additional draconian economic measures on the populace in an an irrational effort to reverse global climate change. In doing so, that elite

[71]This accord, if enacted, would give the international body the dictatorial authority to force all member nations to blur individual identities through mandating the wearing of face masks by all of its citizenry; enforce strict isolation measures, including massive shut downs of all business, industry, and of course, all churches; as well as enacting a global vaccination program of all the general populace world-wide. Once enacted, elements of this control could most likely remain in place under the pretense of preventing future pandemics.

[72]This ruling elite is a very small secret group of prideful men and women, sometimes referred to as the Illuminati (i.e. enlightened ones), who together have a common goal of creating a new world order. Inasmuch as they consider themselves to be the natural rulers of that new world order, privileged by rite of destiny, they seek to preserve their affluent way of life no matter the cost to others, This supposed right is realized in their tremendous political power and massive wealth. The poorer masses are arrogantly believed to be but ignorant underling servants who need to be manipulated into accepting all of their mandates to serve the elite's specific needs and to maintain their predominance.

hierarchy also will have gained full control of the world's economy through the establishment of a strictly-controlled global digital currency.

Once national sovereignty is surrendered over even the least of issues, it is not easily retained over more-significant issues. For that reason, the *United States of America*, along with all other nations, will find themselves on a rapid slope toward ruination and utter dependency, as they are overrun by foreigners and cease to exist as a functioning nation. Along with the disastrous fall of the United States, which had been seen as the last bastion of liberty and justice, mass confusion and great fear concerning the future will result in a state of uncontrolled pandemonium that will ensue in her wake throughout all of the remaining populations of the world.

Should the above premise, or another issue somewhat similar to it, come to pass, as we assume that it ultimately must at some point in time, the stage will have been set for the arrival of an all-powerful global dictator, who will have been appointed by the elite hierarchy to gain control of the ensuing chaos by taking advantage of the political vacuum left upon the earth with the fall of nationalism. He is a man whom the Holy Scriptures refer to in *The Revelation* as a "beast," who will in fact be the satanically-inspired Political Antichrist of the end-times.[73]

The Ultimate Outcome

> *"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."* Psalm 2:1-4

Rest assured that God is absolutely sovereign, omniscient, and omnipotent. Therefore, He is not moved by fallen man's ridicule, nor is He

[73]cf. Commentary, The First Beast – the Political Antichrist, page 279.

deterred by the rebellious organizations and acts of sinful men, nor their ill-conceived technologies, nor their fearful anxieties over climate change that is fully under God's divine power to control. Nor can Satan and his demons prevail in their obstinate spread of iniquity, even as Nationalism is displaced by secular Globalism, thus making way for Satan's Antichrist to ascend to power. All of this moral evil must prevail for a period of time that God has appointed so that Satan's iniquity may be fully exposed, forcibly overcome, and ultimately eliminated forever.

The Eternal Father has already given this world to his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, as an inheritance, and He has granted Him full authority to strictly rule over the earth with a "rod of iron" at a time that He has foreordained. Hence, God in his absolute sovereignty scoffs at little man's offensive activities and their meager efforts to dethrone Him.

The future of the entire world, is in Christ's sovereign hands to aide or to hinder, to bless or to condemn, and to judge in perfect righteousness. God has already begun speaking to men and women through his divine wrath and has vexed them in his sore displeasure through various acts of nature, but most men and women have not heeded his warnings through humble acts of genuine repentance and honest pleas for his mercy. Rather, they have foolishly doubled down on their iniquity in open defiance of God and his Anointed One.

Should the present wickedness and immoral chaos continue on unabated, as we assume that it must, the recent COVID-19 pandemic[74] will become but an early harbinger of additional pandemics and even greater warnings and acts of God's severe judgment to come, both natural and supernatural, which He through his Christ will soon send down from out of the heavens upon an increasingly decadent earth's population.

That final catastrophe is described in great detail within the very last book of the Holy Scriptures. It shall be fully revealed in great detail as

[74]While the COVID-19 pandemic was caused by a virus that had been foolishly engineered by man within a lab at Wuhan, China, its ultimate creation and rapid spread throughout the world must be viewed as a primary act of God's sovereign will in an effort to awaken a rapidly degenerating world to His ultimate power and ability to severely judge reprobate mankind of their sinful activities and decrepit works.

we proceed to probe and exposit the full text of *The Revelation* within the Commentary section of this book.■

Author's Preface

Against the current backdrop of religious apostasy, moral corruption, political anarchy and impending sociopolitical collapse made evident within the Preamble of this book, one prophetic text of the Holy Bible stands out as a clear warning and prediction of the ultimate outcome of mankind's iniquity and their insane rebellion against God and his Christ.

The Revelation firmly stands on its own for both its promise of eternal salvation of God's redeemed and conversely, its severe warnings of eternal destruction of the obstinate unrepentant sinner who arrogantly opposes God's divine will and authority. This document is strategically and appropriately placed as the very last book of the Holy Bible, wherein it lays out and describes God's coming judgment of this decadent world in astonishing detail.

Not surprisingly, no other book of the Bible has been so viciously attacked, maligned, misquoted out of context, grossly misinterpreted, and even ignored as has this extraordinary book. While many still choose to embrace its passages revealing the wondrous delights of Heaven, the same choose to avoid, ignore, deliberately misinterpret, and totally dismiss all other passages that reveal God's necessary judgment of all the unrighteous who continue to oppose his divine authority in a literal Hell.

The Intended Purpose of this Book

In Section 20 of *Comprehensively Reformed Christianity* Book III, we provided a broad overview of the last days including a preliminary survey of the book of the Revelation in Chapter 20.4. The intended purpose of this book, Book IV, is to provide a guarded but thorough exegesis of the entire text of the Revelation in order to determine the precise meaning of every passage and verse of this great document without prejudice as the Divine Author has intended. We have sought to accomplished this through a straight-forward rendering of the text without excessive diversion. We have also sought to avoid repeating unsupported

denominational dogmas or nonsensical Christian cliches. Moreover, every effort has been made to avoid sensationalism through fantasizing metaphorical text beyond the intent and purpose established by the Divine Author who dictated and revealed it.

For that reason, some may complain that this Commentary falls short of necessary personal application. However, it is an accepted truth that when Scripture is clearly understood by the reader, God will use his Word within the hearts and minds of individual believers in such a way that it will accomplish its intended purpose. There it will flourish within them to the edification of their minds without any need of external elaboration by mortal men (cf. Is. 55:10,11).

Admittedly, a diligent detailed study of the book of the Revelation is not for the fearful or the timid faintheartedChristian, nor can it be understood by the devout atheist, whom it renounces; but for those Christian believers who are solidly anchored in their faith, it provides great comfort by assuring us that God will ultimately prevail against all iniquity, thus making possible the wonders of Heaven for his redeemed.

The Approaching Seven-Year Period

The Revelation explicitly warns us that when the iniquity of the world finally reaches its apogee, it will suddenly find itself entering into a catastrophic seven-year period of extremely-intense affliction, unlike any other period found in the history of the world. It will begin with the formation of a global government that ultimately will be headed up by a supreme dictator. He will proclaim a period of peace; however, it will abruptly end in a disastrous world-wide war followed by global starvation, pestilence and a brief period of total chaos. As the second half of this seven-year period begins, God will vent his righteous anger upon the reprobate sinner within a series of progressively more severe judgments.

Although early signs of its approach are already evident with even more signs appearing on the distant horizon, we are not told when this seven-year period will actually begin relative to our current calendar. Nevertheless, Scripture assures us that it will inevitably come upon the

world, and with it all of the events recorded within the Revelation regarding that seven-year period will quickly commence and continue – each one closely following after the other – until the prophetic Word of God is completely fulfilled.

As we study this final seven-year period in this book, we shall discover unspeakable violence being committed against mankind by those who are inspired by Satan to undermine and ultimately destroy the human race. In response, we shall see God unleashing his violent righteous wrath against this unmitigated evil in order to salvage a sizable remnant of mankind as a possession for his namesake, Jesus Christ.

The English Bible Translation Utilized

In order to ensure an unbiased exegesis of the text, it was of foremost importance to select a reliable English translation that was as free as possible from denominational bias and modern innovation. For that reason, the Scripture text utilized within this Commentary is that of the *Authorized King James version* (*AKJV*) of 1611 as it was translated from Desiderius Erasmus' Greek *Textus Receptus* and early on amended.[75] In doing so, we chose to utilize the early Greek text that most if not all of the earlier reformers had depended upon while restoring the great truths of salvation by grace alone during the *Protestant Reformation Movement*.[76]

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[75] Unlike many modern translations, the *AKJV* is a word-to-word translation of every Greek word to a closely corresponding English word as used in the seventeenth century. Many of those words are archaic to a modern English vernacular and thus require a closer examination by the contemporary reader to avoid misunderstanding their meanings. Words often needed to be rearranged from their original order in the Greek text to reorganize them in sentences that conform to English rules of grammar. In addition, certain words were added by the translator to provide for a smoother reading in English. Since those words were not found in the Greek text, they were placed in italics; therefore, they should not be overemphasized or understood as being a part of the divinely inspired text.

[76]We may briefly refer to the *New American Standard Bible* (*NASB*) or the *English Standard Version* (*ESV*) to help clarify the meaning of certain archaic English words and expressions found within the texts of the *AKJV*. When we do this, the secondary text will be duly noted.

About the Interpretive Method Employed

Regarding the interpretative method employed in this Commentary, it was first necessary to determine whether the overall text of the Revelation fit into one of four basic categories 1) Historic text, 2) Didactic Text,[77] 3) Poetic text, or 4) Prophetic text. The Revelation clearly fits into the forth category of Prophetic text as is readily determined from its opening statement: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass;..." (Re.1:1a; underline added).[78] Therefore, each Chapter and verse of the Revelation was carefully studied to obtain a literal grammatical understanding of the text in the prophetic sense in which it was written.

Even when utilizing the best available translation, it is often necessary to resort to the underlying Greek text to assure that each word is clearly understood. Having first done so, we have carefully sought to determine the text's immediate context as well as its greater context within surrounding texts to properly understand them. Any mystical interpretation of the text has been carefully avoided, solely depending upon the biblical text of both the Old and New Testaments for historical background and greater context when warranted.

Along the way, various commentaries written by other men of renown faith were consulted so that this Commentary would not stray away from well-established teaching without a sound textual reason for having done so. Even so, Holy Scripture must retain its ultimate authority and must remain the final arbiter. Therefore, this Commentary is first and foremost squarely based upon a fundamentally sound Biblical Theology.[79]

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[77]i.e. informational and instructional text, such as is found within the epistles of the New Testament.

[78]It could be construed that the text of Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 are merely historic inasmuch as the seven churches were real churches on earth at the end of the first century. However, as will be made clear, there is an important prophetic aspect to each of them that places them well within the overall prophetic message of the Revelation.

Accord with a Futurist Dispensational Interpretation

Having said that, this Commentary does not differ greatly from a futurist dispensational interpretation of the Revelation, particularly so regarding an exacting literal interpretation of its text in the ordinary sense – acknowledging a metaphorical sense only where the writer has so indicated that within the text itself. Accordingly, it holds to the biblical doctrine of a future miraculous transport of the true Church off the earth to be with Christ before God vents his righteous wrath upon the ungodly; the end-time restoration and redemption of the nation of Israel; and the physical return of Jesus Christ to establish his thousand-year Kingdom age upon the earth prior to the great eternal ages that immediately follow. All of this is fully supported by the text of the document itself.

For that reason, this book places a far greater emphasis upon Scriptural text than it does upon tradition. While tradition that is firmly based upon Scripture is often useful in carrying a simple narrative of faith forth from generation to generation, tradition that is based upon non-biblical speculation is very hazardous to that narrative – and indeed destructive to genuine faith.

Rejection of False Roman Catholic Doctrine

A false narrative is especially found within the established dogmas of Roman Catholicism, which are based upon a supposed magisterium of church authority to teach radical traditional religious concepts apart from the authority of Holy Scripture. As a confirmed Protestant, this author must be openly critical of nearly all of Roman Catholic doctrine without apology.[80] We dare not remain silent out of a false sense of tolerance for those few believers who have been unwittingly caught up in its web, lest we violate the veracity of Holy Scripture. We can only pray that those captive believers within Roman Catholicism will one day find

[79]Biblical Theology is essentially the study of the doctrines of the Bible exactly as recorded with respect to their chronology and historical context, without forcing them to conform to an externally-applied preconceived systematic narrative or discipline.

[80]cf. The Pagan Religion within Roman Catholicism, page 596.

their way out of its many pagan dogmas and practices, and that the Holy Spirit will lead them into the path of eternal life through the salvation from sin so freely offered in Christ alone.

Exclusion of Unverified Conventions

That God's Word is Truth is self-evident, but even the best expositors can err at times concerning an exact interpretation of it. All men must depend upon the Holy Spirit within to guide them into all Truth, which so often conflicts with our fleshly thoughts and inclinations. For that reason, this Commentary, as all others, can lay no claim to infallibility regarding its accuracy in every aspect in spite of our best efforts and intention to do so.

Over time, certain minor errors of interpretation can become hardened traditions, and mere premises can become dogmatic concepts that dare not be revisited for fear of upsetting well-established doctrine. We must base all doctrine upon God's Word alone, not upon mere tradition; for that reason, we have sought to reexamine certain traditions and dogmas concerning the last days so as not to be held hostage by them – unless Holy Scripture clearly and unambiguously authenticates them.

Regarding Our Frequent Use of the Word "Rapture"

The miraculous transport of the Church off the earth to be with Christ in the Heavenlies is commonly referred to as "the Rapture" by Dispensationalists. However, it must be noted that the word "rapture" is not found anywhere in the English Bible nor in the underlying Greek text. Rather, the Greek word describing this event in 1Th.4:17 is *harpazo*, which is translated into English as "caught up;" it literally means to suddenly "catch away, pluck, pull, or take by force." In this book, we shall often use the word "transport," sometimes preceded by the words "rapid," "sudden," or "miraculous," in an effort to describe the removal of the true Church from the earth, as it was described by the Apostle Paul in his first epistle to the Thessalonians (cf. 1Th. 4:13-17).

Nevertheless, the word "rapture" is consistently used by most all Christians to denote the sudden miraculous transport of the Church off

the earth to meet Christ in the air. The English word, "rapture" is actually derived from a Latin word, *rapere* meaning "rapid." That word was considered appropriate to describe this event, inasmuch as the translation and transport of the redeemed of the Church will be very rapid and most probably instantaneous.

Contemporary meanings of the word "rapture" are that of being in an uncontrolled state of ecstatic joy or ecstasy. While this could be seen to describe the great joy and bliss experienced by the redeemed as they are being transported into the air to be with Christ, the word "rapture" also has secondary English meanings that attach erotic or sensual connotations to it. Obviously, those definitions cannot be used to properly describe the miraculous translation and transport of the Church off the earth!

Not being overly contentious concerning the nebulous origin of this convention, we have used the word "rapture" on many occasions within this book to describe this sudden miraculous transport of the Church off the earth. In hopes of eliminating any possible confusion with contemporary meanings, we have chosen to always capitalize the word "Rapture," in the text, when it pertains to the miraculous "catching up" of the Church from the earth, in order to signify the special theological context in which this word is being used.

External Systematic Interpretations

While an organized systematic approach to Bible interpretation can be quite useful and has much to recommend it over a haphazard disorganized study, certain texts of the Scriptures do not fit into any rigid systematized mold externally applied to it. This is especially so concerning the text of the Revelation. When encountering those texts, Scripture must be allowed to speak for itself apart from any external structural compliance – lest a distortion of its true meaning should take place in an attempt to conform it to a man-made system of interpretation. All Scripture was written by God through mortal men by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2Ti. 3:16a), while all organized systems of study concerning

it's structure are devised by the rational thought process of mortal men alone.

Consequently, two "time-honored" premises set forth by John Nelson Darby, who has been properly credited with having formulated today's popular interpretation of biblical text known as systematic Dispensationalism,[81] have been set aside in this exposition as unreliable for lack of substantial Scriptural proof of their veracity. Those two premises are: 1) the assumption that the "great tribulation" spoken of by Jesus in his Olivet Discourse found in Matthew 24:21[82] is a full seven years in length and 2) the premise that a future "hidden" or "secret" unrecorded Rapture of the church will take place just before that final seven-year period begins.[83]

Dismissing those two premises from consideration in developing this Commentary has not been done in order to be contentious or novel, but rather to allow us to study the text of the Revelation in a purely Scriptural context. Doing so has resulted in a straight-forward biblical-based interpretation of Revelation Chapters 4 through 7, which differs in various ways with commonly-accepted Dispensational teachings held by many highly-respected Bible commentators. Those differences will be candidly discussed in considerable detail in our Commentary as we closely examine relevant texts contained within those four chapters.

Supplementary Articles

For those who may want to pursue a more in-depth study of the Revelation, a considerable amount of supplementary material has been placed in an expanded Addendum separate of the Commentary itself. In hopes of making the Commentary easier to follow, references are commonly made to those articles through less obtrusive footnotes. This was

[81] cf. Addendum: Dispensationalism, page 460.

[82] cf. Addendum: Jesus' Olivet Discourse, page 537.

[83] cf. Addendum: The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church, page 492; and more particularly, The Seventieth Week of Daniel, page 530.

done in order to allow the commentary on the inspired text to flow more consistently from verse-to-verse without significant disruption by way of over-excessive explanation.

Because the subject matter contained within various Articles overlap the subject matter of other Articles, a certain amount of repetition of associated topics was required to make each Article complete when read by itself. Hence, many cross-references will be found back to the Commentary as well as to other Articles. The reader should feel free to read those ancillary articles in the Addendum separately by themselves, or if you so prefer, you may choose to read certain Articles as they are referred to within this Commentary when it is deemed needful for additional clarity.

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It is my sincere hope that this Commentary and its ancillary Articles will aid the believer in reconciling the truth that Jesus Christ is both a man who has walked in our flesh, as well as the Holy eternal God who created us. He is both a merciful savior and an exacting judge who will and must punish all sin that has not been forgiven and blotted out through his atoning death on the cross. In doing so, He must severely judge all those men and women in whom sin continues to dwell and fester, as a consequence of their having denied and rejected the great atonement that He has so freely and graciously offered.

Although salvation is sweet, God's necessary judgment in defense of his divine love that had inspired it is very bitter to contemplate – and the text of the Revelation is replete with God's acts of severe judgment. We must accept both as righteous acts of God, for we are but his creatures that were made solely for his express purpose and pleasure to be utilized in accordance with His divine will. Knowing that to be true, let us now join our minds together as one in the Lord Christ Jesus, as we explore the depths of this most wondrous book. ●

Introduction to the Revelation

There are seventeen prophetic books in the Old Testament, and we also find short prophetic texts scattered throughout the New Testament, but the text of the Revelation is the only entirely prophetic book found within the New Testament. That fact, as well as its placement at the end of Holy Scripture, makes it unique enough to demand our full attention.

This last book of the Bible has always fascinated men and women because it tells about the last days of mankind on earth at the end of time.[84] This interest has been greatly enhanced today in view of the obvious moral and political decline of human society driving mankind toward a world-wide state of chaos. The once unthinkable idea of a global nuclear holocaust looms ever closer on the horizon, as rogue nations and radical political and religious groups scramble to obtain nuclear superiority.

Unfortunately, many delve into the book of the Revelation in an attempt to discover how God will deal with mankind's plunge into moral chaos without having given due diligence to studying the prophetic passages that come before it in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Without that background, the Revelation is virtually indecipherable – leading many to fantasize over its meaning or to conclude that the Book of the Revelation is but a jumble of unrelated visions randomly dispersed throughout the book that have no cohesive organization or basis in reality.

Still others find its many passages of coming judgment so frightening that they believe they merely act to suppress the Christian's present-day joy. For that reason, this important book is ignored by many individuals and churches. Admittedly there are many things contained in the Revelation that we would rather not consider because of their terrifying implications, but that is no reason why a mature believer who is secure

[84] The reference here applies only to earth-time, which had a beginning and will also have an end. (cf. Earth-Time, Addendum, page 669).

in Christ cannot accept what is being revealed about God's future judgments as they seek the Holy Spirit to comfort and aid them in their understanding.

The Beatitude of the Revelation

Thus, there is a unique blessing and promise given to those who read, hear, and keep the words of the 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" (Re.1:3). This same blessing is repeated by Jesus near the very end of this document: "Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book:" (Re.22:7).

Title of the Document

The proper title of this document is derived from the first five words of its opening verse: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ…," although it is commonly abbreviated as "The Revelation" or simply "Revelation."[85] The English word "revelation," from which this book gets its name, is derived from the Greek word *apokalypsis.* Our English word "apocalypse" is transliterated from this Greek word, and it is very narrowly defined as a time of great destruction that will come about at the end of days. However, the primary meaning of *apokalypsis* is "discovery" or "unveiling." For that reason, some refer to the title of this book as "The Apocalypse." The Revelation document clearly unveils all of the devastating events that must occur in the last days in considerable detail, yet a far greater revelation is found to be foremost: the unveiling of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ in all of his power and glory.

[85] Some erroneously refer to this book as the "Revelations." While many things are revealed in this book, the book as a whole constitutes one unified revelation of the person and work of Jesus Christ from beginning to end.

Primary Focus of the Document

Therefore, the primary intent of the book of the Revelation is not to focus our thoughts on wild beasts and the massive destruction that will take place in the last days, but to reveal the glory, authority, and power of the Lord Jesus Christ to rule over all his creation and to ultimately judge an unrepentant mankind that has arrogantly rejected his gracious offer of redemption. Within the four Gospels, Jesus has been revealed to us in his human persona as He walked down here among men with glimpses of his deity showing through his many words and miracles. He died as a perfect man as a propitiation for our sins, and He rose again in eternal human flesh that was not yet glorified.

However, "we no longer know Him after the flesh" (cf. 2Co. 5:16) as men once did, but must now come to know Him in his eternal glorified state as the Son of the living God, having all the prerogatives and power of deity to strictly rule his creation. This glorified Christ is fully revealed to us within the Revelation document in all of his eternal splendor as the Lord and ruler over his Church, as well as the judge over all those who deny Him, that all may come to know and worship Him as He truly is – the almighty God.

Future-Prophetic Purpose of the Document

While Jesus is the primary focus of this document, the stated purpose of this document as given in the very first verse of the text is to inform all of the Lord's servants of things "which must shortly come to pass." Those "things" are future events that have an objective reality in both time and space.

Inasmuch as this document was written for the elucidation of first-century Christians regarding events "which must shortly come to pass" within a perceived future, some question whether some or all of the events contained in this book may have already taken place in our past. Certainly, there is a sense in which Chapters 1-3 may be initially interpreted in that context. However, a clear rendering of that text indicates that the seven churches indeed have a future prophetic aspect beyond the

lifespans of first-century Christians. Moreover, all the events of judgments contained in the remainder of this prophecy are so specific and so catastrophic that we would most surely know if they had already occurred at any time in our historic past.[86]

Human Penmanship

Although all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (cf. 2Ti. 3:16a), who alone is its divine Author, mortal men are called upon to to inscribe it into written text for the spiritual benefit of others. The Revelation document was initially intended to be circulated within a group of seven churches in Asia minor (cf. Revelation Chapters 2 and 3), which were under the Apostle John's personal headship during a time of intense Roman persecution. Therefore, it was essential that John authenticate this document by plainly stating his name as the human writer– much as did the Apostle Paul in most if not all of his epistles.[87] John not only refers to himself by name within this document (cf. Re.1:4,9; 22:8), but, adds the relevant fact that he was in exile because of his firm witness of the Gospel. Since he specifically identified himself as having been incarcerated on the island of Patmos (cf. Re.1:9), it all but eliminates any possibility that the document was written by some other man with a similar name.

The Revelation document was fully accepted as authoritative Scriptural text by the early Church on the basis that it was plainly written by John the apostle. We have well documented proof that early church leaders accepted John the apostle as its author. Two of those men had lived in one of the cities mentioned in Revelation Chapter 2. In AD 135, Justin Martyr (ca, 100-165), who had lived for a time in Ephesus, stated in his *Dialogue with Trypho* that "John, one of the apostles of Christ,

[86] There are quite simple explanations answering all possible objections to a yet futurist view of this prophecy, a view which we firmly hold to and reveal throughout this Commentary. (cf. Addendum: Futurist Interpretation of the Revelation, page 468).

[87] Many including this author consider the book of Hebrews to be a noted exception wherein Paul did not state his name.

prophesied by a revelation given to him..." Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130-200?), a native of Smyrna and a young student of Polycarp (ca. 69-156), who was a disciple of John, wrote in his *Against Heresies* that "John the Lord's disciple says...in the Apocalypse..."

Moreover, Clement of Alexandria (ca.150-215?) noted that its writer was John the apostle – who had been exiled on Patmos. Later Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 160-213) wrote about the future thousand-year reign of Christ and a new Jerusalem taken from the Revelation, indicating that it had been written by the Apostle John. Still other evidence is found in the later writings of Origen of Alexandria (ca, 185-254) and Victorinus of Pettau (ca. ?-303), who actually wrote an early commentary on the book of Revelation. Such strong evidence is overwhelming regarding the writer of the Revelation being none other than John, the apostle of the Lord Jesus.

Noted Variation in Linguistic Style

Some have noted that there is a considerable variation in the linguistic style of the text of the Revelation, thus differentiating it from the Gospel and epistles written by the Apostle John. However, skilled writers often alter their styles and parlance to suit the subject matter at hand. In addition, the text must closely conform to the dialect and linguistic abilities of its intended recipients, so that they may better understand its words and phrases. This could somewhat account for an intentional variation in the Greek used by John.

More significantly however, the subject matter of the Revelation prophecy is uniquely different from that of his epistles which were didactic in style. While writing the text of the Revelation, John was called upon to stretch his human literary skills to record a series of Heavenly visions that were most strange even to his own mind. We must also fully realize that large portions of the text of this document had been dictated to John by God through various angels and even by the Lord Jesus Himself.

Finally, it must be noted that the writers of the epistles often dictated the text to a skilled scribe to insure its literary accuracy – a luxury not

likely available to John while he was imprisoned upon the barren island of Patmos.

Date of the Document

Two dates are commonly offered for the writing of the Revelation document: the first on or about AD 68 during the period of persecution by the mad Roman emperor Nero, and the second on or about AD 96 during a period of severe persecution by the Roman emperor Domitian. It should be noted that the earlier date is commonly put forth only by those who hold to a preterist interpretation of the Revelation.[88] There is no valid historic evidence for this earlier date, while there is considerable evidence that the early Church widely accepted the later date.

According to biblical and non-biblical accounts, the Apostle John lived to be of old age, thus extending the Apostolic Period to very near the end of the first century (cf. Jn. 21:20–24). Therefore, John would have lived through the time of the final siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of the Roman Empire in AD 70.

If John or others of the Jerusalem church had lived in Jerusalem as that time approached, it is certain that they would have fled to other regions before the city fell, inasmuch as the destruction of Jerusalem had been clearly foretold by the Lord Jesus along with his instruction for them to flee when the armies gathered (cf. Lu.21:20–22).

It is commonly believed that John left Jerusalem for Ephesus following the beheading of the Apostle Paul in Rome that took place during the period of persecution by the Roman emperor Nero in or around AD 68. John then assumed the pastoral office of the Ephesus church, which had remained sound in the doctrines of the faith during the mid sixties through the ministry of Paul prior to his death, as is evidenced in his epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, as well as in his two personal epistles to Timothy.

John continued to disciple believers at Ephesus as well as mentoring believers in six other churches within the region until about the year AD

[88]cf. Preterism, page 452.

95. It was then that Roman authorities arrested him and exiled him to the small desolate island of Patmos, which was about ten miles long and six miles wide, located about sixty miles southwest of Ephesus in the Aegean sea. John's exile took place during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian who instituted a brief but very severe and widespread reign of terror against all Christian believers. Due to that extreme persecution before and after Paul's imprisonment, the spiritual condition of those seven churches had seriously deteriorated – with the exception of the two churches located at Smyrna and at Philadelphia.

It was while exiled on the island of Patmos, that John received the series of visions that he recorded in the book of the Revelation. This effectively dates the document to somewhere around the year AD 96.

Canonization of the Document

As we have stated, the Revelation was fully accepted as authoritative Scriptural text by the early Church – until that acceptance was refuted by Dionysius, a bishop of Alexandria (AD 248-264). He repudiated it primarily because it contained text in Chapter 20 supporting *Chiliaism*, the doctrine regarding a future millennial age of Jews on earth, a teaching that he strongly opposed. His objections were challenged and eventually refuted by Athanasius, a later bishop of Alexandria, in AD 373. Accordingly, the book of Revelation was officially included along with John's Gospel and his three epistles within the completed canon[89] of Scripture by a church Council at Carthage in the year AD 398.

Objections to the Revelation's Place in the Canon

Centuries later, objections to the book's canonization came to fore during the *Protestant Reformation Movement*, led by Martin Luther and other reformers, on the grounds of its supposed nebulous authorship, as well as its intense Jewish content – which could not be easily reconciled with reformed belief and practice within the reformed church of that

[89] Canon, as it is used here, is defined as being a group of written documents that are recognized by ecclesiastical authority as inspired sacred text.

day. It must be noted that the great Protestant reformer, John Calvin, wrote commentaries on every book of the New Testament with the sole exception of the Revelation, which he completely neglected in all of his voluminous writings.

Technical disputes continue today over its authorship. Those center upon its rather unwieldy prophetic style and an apparent inferior quality of its Greek, which deviates from that found in John's Gospel. We have adequately countered concerns over variations in linguistic style above on page 92. It is also pointed out that John did not include his name in his Gospel, while he prominently identified himself as John in the Revelation document. It is nonsensical to deny the Apostle John's authorship on the grounds that he openly identified himself as its writer within the document!

Jewish Context of the Revelation

Although it is located at the very end of the Christian New Testament, we find that the book of the Revelation has far more to say about Israel and the Jew than it does about the Church and the Christian believer. Nevertheless, very few Jews have ever seen, let alone have actually read this document, and those who have done so commonly reject it out of hand. Because Christ crucified remains a stumbling block to today's Jew, they are blinded to the reality that Jesus, whom Jews of the first-century demanded to be crucified, was and is their long awaited Messiah and Lord. That blindness must one day be lifted in order that Israel may fully embrace Him whom they had previously rejected with fierce anger and violence.

Even so, it must be clearly understood that the translation of the Hebrew word *moshiach* (Messiah) into Greek is *khristos*, which when translated into English is Christ (cf. Jn. 1:41). Therefore Christ is, in fact and in title, the Messiah that the Jews had so long awaited. For that reason, we shall often use the anglicized Hebrew word Messiah, without prejudice, to refer to Christ in keeping with the Jewish context of the Revelation document. At other times we may use both together as a matter of emphasis in order to make his singular identity clear.

The Heavenly visions that John recorded have an extremely Jewish flavor about them – although unique in their overriding exposition of Jesus Christ as the Messiah within that Jewish context. Therefore, we shall discover that the Revelation was written to be an unveiling of the person and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, not only to the Gentile, but more specifically to the Jew. For that reason Paul, born a Benjamite of the stock of Israel could say, "... I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Ro,1:16).

The Wall of Separation

Although the great wall of separation between Jew and Gentile has been removed in the Gospel of Christ,[90] a strange animosity remains. The evident non-biblical antisemitism of the Roman Church in the past and present, which still prevails within many major Protestant denominations, has only added to the Jew's adamant rejection of the good tidings concerning the earlier advent of their Messiah.[91] Therefore, a complete unveiling of Christ to the eyes of the Jew will not occur until the Church has been removed from the earth.

As Christians living in today's world, we must come to an understanding of the inevitability of Israel's future redemption in order to accept the enlightenment of our minds that the Revelation affords to those who will receive it. If we fail to accept the fact of Israel's ultimate redemption, the Revelation will in effect become our own stumbling-block to achieving an understanding of all of the events contained within it, because we read about them through our own thick veil of self-induced blindness

[90] cf. Ep. 2:11-16.

[91] It should be noted however that a great warmth has developed for Israel within many of today's evangelical churches, which must be largely attributed to a biblical understanding of Israel's future redemption as recorded in the book of the Revelation (cf. Ro. 11:15).

References to Old-Testament Texts

Although there are no direct references to Old-Testament text by chapter and verse,[92] the Revelation alludes to or references the Old Testament more than five-hundred times. In its total of 404 verses, 278 contain references to the Old Testament – nearly seventy percent. John often refers to the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, as well as alluding to information contained in the Old-Testament books of Exodus, Deuteronomy, and the Psalms. Therefore, a Christian should at the very least acquire a basic understanding of Old-Testament Scripture before delving into the prophecy of this book. In addition to the Old Testament, we must have a sound knowledge of the entire New Testament that precedes the Revelation. Moreover, it would be very helpful to attain a basic knowledge of the vast history of the Church on earth that has transpired since this document was written.[93]

The Revelation is an Open Text

Although preparation through a careful study of both the Old-Testament and New-Testament must be considered a valuable prerequisite to its study, we must clearly understand that the book of the Revelation is not a sealed prophecy to be revealed at a future date (cf. Re.22:10) as was specific texts of the prophecy of Daniel (cf. Da.12:4,9). Rather, it is an open text throughout that unveils prophetic knowledge through a series of visions to all mature believers in Christ who will take the time to prepare themselves and diligently study it. Nothing has been hidden away out of view or encrypted for the understanding of a supposed group of "super saints." That said, unbelievers who attempt to make sense of it must always be thwarted, inasmuch as all Scripture including The Revelation must be spiritually discerned, as the Holy Spirit opens

[92]The original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts did not contain chapter divisions or verse numbering. They are not inspired, but were later added by Bible scholars to help navigate the text.

[93] cf. Section 17 *Early Church History* and Section 18 *Reformed Church History* contained in the first half of *Comprehensively Reformed Christianity*, Book III.

mortal minds to receive it – a significant spiritual agency that is missing in those who are not in Christ.

Chronological Construction

The Revelation is not a difficult book to follow because of its orderly chronological construction from beginning to end. Three major divisions of the book are recorded in Revelation verse 1:19 wherein John is told to write down: 1) the things that he "has seen" regarding the glorified Christ found in Chapter 1; 2) things "which are" in the present Church age found in Chapters 2 and 3, as well as the state of things in Heaven during that same period found in Chapters 4 and 5; and 3) future things "which shall be hereafter," which are revealed in Chapters 6-22.

The texts of Chapters 1 through 3, the things that John "has seen" and the things "which are" have a definite historic aspect to them in this age; but as we shall discover, Chapters 2 and 3 also have a future-prophetic aspect as well. The far future things "which shall be hereafter" are set forth beginning in Chapter 6 in a strictly organized chronological narrative. However, there is a disruption in this strict chronological narrative in Chapters 12 through 14, inasmuch as they chronologically parallel Chapters 6 through 11. Within this secondary narrative, considerable background information and details concerning previously revealed events are disclosed. In Chapter 15, the prophetic chronology continues on to the end of the document, with occasional short pauses, a significant parenthetical insert, and various brief flashbacks.[94]

All Earlier Biblical Prophecies Fulfilled

While the Revelation is a prophetic book that is predictive of future events, we discover that the Revelation does not originate any new prophecies; rather, it consummates all previous biblical prophecies in astonishing detail. It is in that sense a destination document into which

[94] For a detailed examination of the book's chronology refer to Illustration 5: Chronology of the Revelation on page 433.

all yet unfulfilled Old and New-Testament prophecies flow – both to reveal their intent and purpose, and to attain their ultimate fulfillment.

Below we list seven of the earlier major prophecies that reach their fulfillment in this book:

- The great struggle between good and evil – between Satan and his demons and the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ (cf. Ge.3:15; Ez.28:18).
- The man of sin, the Antichrist, is revealed and ultimately judged (cf. Ez. 28:1-10; 2Th. 2:3)
- The seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks – in parallel with Jesus' Olivet Discourse – is fulfilled (cf. Da. 9:24-26;Mt. 24,25)
- The great tribulation period begins and quickly ends as Christ cuts it short for the sake of his Elect (cf. De. 4:30; Mt.24:21,22)
- The completion of the Church built by Christ (cf. Mt.16:18), and the growth and ultimate destruction of the counterfeit apostate church takes place (cf. Da.2:31-45; Mt.13).
- The translation and Rapture of the true Church takes place (cf. 1Th. 4:13-18; 1Co. 15:51,52)
- All of God's covenant promises to Israel are fulfilled (cf. Ge.12:1-3)
- The second advent of Christ to establish his Millennial Kingdom on earth is realized (cf. Jude vv. 14,15).

All that God has to say to mankind is consummated within this final book of the Bible; therefore, any predictive prophecy put forth as valid by any mortal man (or woman) outside of that which is contained in this book is expressly forbidden (cf. Re. 22:18). Such extra-biblical prophecy is highly deceptive, and is satanically evil in its intent.

Repetitive Use of the Number Seven

God established that the passage of time on earth be reckoned by created nature through the sun, the moon, and the stars as days, months, seasons, and years. However, the week containing seven days cannot be

reconciled within nature. The number seven is first seen as the number of days contained within the period of God's creative activity, during which his entire work of creation was concluded in 6 days and declared to be perfect on the seventh.[95] Therefore, the number seven, as it is used in Scripture, implies perfection in the sense of absolute completeness.

As the book of Genesis was a book of beginnings, we find that The Revelation is a book of completions. Therefore, it should not be surprising to find the number seven repeated here in the Revelation as a period of seven years,[96] in which God concludes His final work of redemption and judgment.

The underlying structure of the Revelation is based upon a group of sevens, such that the number seven appears in thirty-one of its verses. Seven candlesticks are seen in Revelation Chapter 1, which represents the seven churches found in Chapters 2-3. Moreover, an interconnected "triad of sevens"[97] underlies a major portion of the book: seven seals of a Heavenly scroll are presented in Chapters 6-7, the seventh of which leads directly into seven trumpet judgments in Chapters 8-11, the seventh of which leads directly into seven bowls of God's wrath in Chapters 16-18. Seven historic figures are presented in Chapters 12-13; and lastly, seven final issues can be observed as being reconciled and concluded in Chapters 14-22.

John's Use of Metaphors and Allegory

The text of the Revelation contains a unified series of Heavenly visions. What John received in those visions was presented to him while he was in a spiritual state of mind; much of it so ethereal that it was be-

[95] In the Old Testament, the English word "week" is translated from various Hebrew words meaning "sevened," while in the New Testament it is translated from the Greek word *sabbaton*, which is interpreted to mean the seven days that begins immediately following a Sabbath day and concludes in a second Sabbath day.

[96] As was mentioned above, the number seven is prominent in Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks, which ends in this final week of seven years.

[97] cf. Illustration 4 on page 432.

yond any ordinary human means of description. Thus, John was sorely pressed to record the humanly inexpressible in a somewhat understandable way. That effort necessitated John's frequent use of descriptive metaphors within allegories to describe what he saw. When John wrote about what he saw in that way, he was very careful to say so specifically or very suggestively in order to aid us in a proper interpretation of his words. For instance, John used the phrase "as it were" 12 times, the phrase "like unto" 14 times, as well as using the words "like" or "as" alone in many other places to indicate that he was using metaphors to describe what he saw when he was not able to give us a more exact description. For example, "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" (Re.9:7; emphasis added).

At times in the Revelation, John saw what he referred to as "signs." A sign is by definition something that represents or points to a reality of far greater significance. This is where we find that John often resorted to allegory to express that reality. At times, we recognize that what John is referring to is of necessity a metaphor or allegory of a reality by his application of specific attributes or activities to something that do not in any way conform to a common description. Keeping things in context is very important here; we must tread very carefully so as to not mistakenly apply our own allegory or metaphor to something where it was not so intended in the text.

Man and Woman Created as a Complementary Entity

The word "man" is found thirty three times in the Revelation where it often refers to man in a generic sense implying both man and woman. Eve was taken out of the side of Adam;[98] although physically separated from Adam, she was thereafter still identified with and in him as one complementary being – that is, wherein one completes the other. This is why sin is said to be Adam's sin, although it was actually Eve who was seduced by the serpent to eat of the forbidden fruit and then serve the

[98]cf. Ge. 2:21-23

same to Adam.[99] Eve is seen as having acted within Adam as one complementary being when she sinned – even before Adam, ate of the fruit of the tree of good and evil, thus making him likewise guilty of her sin.[100]

Therefore in a general sense, we find that both redeemed men and redeemed women are referred to in the Revelation as "sons" of God without any implied distinction of gender. Son, which is *uihos* in the Greek, establishes a close kinship of a father to a child – or more specifically a son. The word "son" is found being used four times with this two-fold significance within the Revelation.

John's Use of "Woman" as a Metaphor

Nevertheless, the word "woman" is found fifteen times and "women" is found two times in the Revelation. In Revelation Chapter 2:20 "woman" is used to refer to an actual woman as being a type of Jezebel. In Revelation 14:4, it is quite possible that immoral "women" are being referred to there as being the source of defilement for men.

With those two exceptions, the word "woman" is used in the Revelation as a metaphor signifying something other than a human woman.

[99]The text of Genesis 3:6 does not explicitly make clear that Adam knew that the fruit that Eve gave him came from the forbidden tree. It merely says that Eve "took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." This is merely implied by the words, "her husband with her."

[100]Men and women are not created equivalent in their standing before God, since each has been designed by Him to fulfill a specific complementary role in marriage, which He has assigned for them to fulfill at conception. This causes them to differ ontologically and biologically one from the other. The seed of human life comes from Adam, from whose body Eve had been taken to be his helpmate, while the carrying and nurturing of human life is the full responsibility of Eve. Man's continuing role is to make the knowledge and commandments of God known to his wife and their offspring, such that they may resist the snares of the evil one and inherit eternal life along with him. Adam is therefore responsible for the soul of his wife; to the extent that the two God-given roles are not equivalent nor are they interchangeable. In Heaven, there will be no further distinction of male and female, nor a continuation of the institution of marriage, such that both redeemed man and redeemed women then will then have equal standing as sons of God.

Throughout Revelation Chapter 12, "woman" is used metaphorically to represent the nation of Israel. Conversely, in Chapter 17, "woman" is used to represent a counterpart that is in opposition to Israel; she is identified there as Babylon, the source of all false religion, which is in opposition to God and his Christ.[101]

The Objective Reality of John's Allegories

All of the things, places, or beings contained in the Revelation that one must accept as metaphors or subjective allegory, nonetheless have a literal objective reality, such that the events that surround them must be fulfilled exactly as they are presented – even as past prophecies were so often fulfilled. Therefore, it is imperative that we accept a literal sense of the text while maintaining a careful awareness of its prophetic style such that we do not deviate from its intended meaning; always preferring a literal rendition over an allegorical interpretation unless the text itself expressively states it as such through John's own words or through a very specific context.

Although the language used by John in the Revelation is highly figurative, we must understand that all of those figures represent real things, persons, or events that we could not hope to understand if they had been expressed more exactly. The metaphors and allegories that John utilized in describing these many visions are intended to be a means to aid our understanding; they are not intended to obscure it. Therefore, it is very important that we carefully follow John's allegories exactly as he gave them, being careful not to fabricate additional allegories of our own on top of them. Admittedly, this leaves us a very narrow line to follow between factual neglect and extra-biblical exaggeration. With that admonition in mind, we must pray for divine guidance as we now take up the daunting task of examining the sacred text of the Revelation from beginning to end. ●

[101]In Revelation 9:8, "locusts" (i.e. demons) are obliquely described as having the hair of women.

COMMENTARY

An Exposition of the Entire Text of the Revelation

General Outline

As we begin our in-depth Commentary on the Revelation, it is appropriate that we provide a general outline of the entire text of this document in the precise order in which it has been written. That order is illustrated in the outline below:[102]

I. The Glorious Person of Jesus Christ Revealed to John, Chapter 1

A. Title of the book, v. 1
B. Procedural train of the prophecy of the Revelation, v. 2
C. Blessings received through studying the prophecy of this book, v. 3
D. Greetings from John – and from Jesus Christ in Heaven, vv. 4-8
E. The glorified Christ Revealed to John, as judge of His Church, vv. 9-18
F. Three general divisions of the Revelation, v. 19
    1. The things John had seen in Chapter 1
    2. The things that are in Chapters 2- 5
    3. The things that shall be hereafter in Chapters 6-22
G. Seven stars and seven lampstands, v. 20

II. The Seven Churches, Chapters 2, 3 – the things that are on earth

A. Seven Messages sent to Seven Churches in Asia Minor
    1. Jesus' Message to the church in Ephesus, Chapter 2:1-7
    2. Jesus' Message to the church in Smyrna, Chapter 2:8-11
    3. Jesus' Message to the church in Pergamum, Chapter 2:12-17
    4. Jesus' Message to the church in Thyatira, Chapter 2:18-29
    5. Jesus' Message to the church in Sardis, Chapter 3:1-6
    6. Jesus' Message to the church in Philadelphia, Chapter 3:7-13
    7. Jesus' Message to the church in Laodicea, Chapter 3:14-22

III. The scene in Heaven, Chapters 4, 5 – the things that are in Heaven

A. John's glorious vision of Heaven
    1. The throne of God, 4:1-3
    2. Twenty-four elders, 4:4, 5
    3. Four living creatures, 4:6-11
    4. A Book with seven seals, 5:1-4
    5. Christ appears in Heaven as a Lamb that has been slain, 5:5-10
    6. A myriad of angels of Heaven joins in a song of praise and redemption, 5:11, 12

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[102]In addition, we have provided a chronological outline of the Revelation in Illustration 5 on page 433, which is summarized on page 429 within the Addendum Article entitled the Chronology of the Revelation.

7. Universal worship of the Savior and the Sovereign of the universe, 5:13, 14

IV. The Final Seven-year Period of the Current Age, Chapters 6 – 18

A. Opening of the seven-sealed book, Chapters 6 – 8:1

1. Breaking of the first seal, 6:1, 2 (Rider on a white horse)
2. Breaking of the second seal, 6:3, 4 (Rider on a red horse)
3. Breaking of the third seal, 6:5, 6 (Rider on a black horse)
4. Breaking of the fourth seal, 6:7, 8 (Rider on a pale horse)
5. Breaking of the fifth seal, 6:9-11 (Prayer of the martyred remnant)
6. Breaking of the sixth seal, 6:12-17 (The Day of Wrath has come)
7. First Interlude, Chapter 7
    a. Purpose for the interlude between the 6th and 7th seals, vv. 1-3
    b. Remnant of Israel is sealed, vv. 4-8
    c. Redeemed multitude of saints appears in Heaven, vv. 9-17
    h. Breaking of the seventh seal, 8:1

B. The seven trumpet Judgments, Chapters 8:2 – 11:19

1. Angel at the altar with censer of incense, 8:2-6
2. First trumpet — one third of trees and grass burnt, 8:7
3. Second trumpet — one third of seas become blood, 8:8, 9
4. Third trumpet — one-third of fresh water becomes bitter, 8:10, 11
5. Fourth trumpet — one third of sun, moon, stars smitten, 8:12, 13
6. Fifth trumpet – first woe – fallen stars and plague of locusts, 9:1-12
7. Sixth trumpet – second woe – angels loosed at the river Euphrates, 9:13-21
8. Second Interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets, 10:1 — 11:14
    a. A strong angel appears holding open a little book, 10:1-7
    b. John digests the contents of the little book, 10:8-11
    c. Date set for the end of “the times of the Gentiles,” 11:1, 2
    d. Period of the prophesying of the two witnesses, 11:3-12

e. A great global earthquake, 11:13, 14

9. Seventh trumpet – third woe – opening of the Temple in Heaven, 11:15-19

C. The activities of Satan in opposition to Christ are disclosed, Chapters 12, 13

1. The woman — Israel, 12:1, 2
2. The red dragon — Satan, 12:3, 4
3. The child of the woman — Jesus Christ, 12:5, 6
4. Michael, the archangel, wars with the dragon, 12:7-12
5. The dragon persecutes the woman, 12:13-16
6. The dragon wars with the remnant, 12:1
7. Wild beast arises out of the sea — the Political Antichrist, 13:1-10
    a. Antichrist, description, vv. 1, 2
    b. Antichrist, death-dealing wound, v. 3
    c. Antichrist, deity assumed, vv. 4, 5
    d. Antichrist, openly defies God, vv. 6-8
    e. Defiance of the Antichrist denied to anyone, vv. 9, 10
8. Wild beast arises out of the earth — the False Prophet, 13:11-18
    a. False Prophet's description, v. 11
    b. False Prophet's delegated authority, vv. 12-14
    c. False Prophet's delusion perpetrated upon the world, vv. 15-17
    d. False Prophet's numerical designation 666, v. 18

D. Preamble to the end of the final Seven-Year Period, Chapter 14

1. Presence of the Lamb with the 144,000, vv. 1-5
2. Proclamation of the everlasting Gospel, vv. 6, 7
3. Prophetic pronouncement of judgment on Babylon, v. 8
4. Pronouncement of judgment on all those who received the mark of the beast, vv. 9-12
5. Praise for those who die in the Lord henceforth, v. 13
6. The Final Reaping of the Earth, vv. 14-20

E. Pouring out of the seven bowls of God's wrath, Chapters 15, 16

1. Preparation for final judgment of God, 15:1 - 16:1
    a. Saints in Heaven worship God declaring that He is holy and just in exercising his great wrath, 15:1-4

b. Temple of the tabernacle opened in Heaven, 15:5
. c. Seven angels, having seven bowls, step forth, 15:6 -16:1
2. Pouring out of the first bowl, 16:2
3. Pouring out of the second bowl, 16:3
4. Pouring out of the third bowl, 16:4-7
5. Pouring out of the fourth bowl, 16:8, 9
6. Pouring out of the fifth bowl, 16:10, 11
7. Pouring out of the sixth bowl, 16:12
8. Third Interlude: kings of earth proceed to HarMagedon, 16:13-16
9 Pouring out of the seventh bowl, 16:17-21

F. The two Babylons are judged, Chapters 17, 18
1. The apostate church of Babylon in the latter days, Chapter 17
a. Great harlot riding the wild beast, vv. 1-7
b. Angry Kings of the earth destroy the great harlot, vv. 8-18
2. Commercial Babylon is judged, Chapter 18
a. Announcement of the fall of commercial Babylon, vv. 1-8
b. Anguish in the world because of Babylon's destruction, vv. 9-19
c. Joy in Heaven over the judgment on Babylon, vv. 20-24

G. Marriage of the Lamb and return of Christ in judgment, Chapter 19
1. Four hallelujahs, vv. 1-6
2. The marriage supper of the Bride and the Lamb, vv. 7-10
3. Return of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, vv. 11-16
4. The War of Armageddon, vv. 17, 18
5. Hell opened – Antichrist and False Prophet first occupants vv. 19-21

V**. The Millennial Age on Earth, Chapter 20**
A. Satan bound for 1000 years, vv. 1-3
B. Saints reign with Christ 1000 years, vv. 4-6
C. Satan loosed after the 1000 years, vv. 7
1. The Eradication of Atheism: Gog and Magog vv. 8,9
D. Satan is cast into lake of fire and brimstone, v. 10

E. Setting of Great White Throne – the lost are judged and follow Satan into the lake of fire and brimstone, vv. 11-15

VI. Redeemed Man's entrance into the Eternal Ages, Chapters 21, 22

A. A New heaven, a New earth, and a New Jerusalem are created, 21:1, 2
B. The New eternal era, God tabernacles with man 21:3-8
C. The New Jerusalem, description of the eternal abode of the Bride, 21:9-21
D. A new relationship established between God and man, 21:22, 23
E. The center of the New Creation, 21:24-27
F. The abundance of river of the water of life and the tree of life, 22:1-5
G. The promise of the quick and sudden return of Christ, 22:6-16
H. A final invitation for the repentant sinner to come to Christ to receive salvation 22:17
I. A severe warning against adding to or deleting any of the content found within the prophecy contained in this Book, 22:18, 19
J. The final promise of God, and John's closing prayer, 22:20, 21 ○

Revelation Chapter 1

"[1]The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: [2]who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw" (Re. 1:1,2).

As was stated in the Introduction, the first five words of this first verse gives us the proper title of this document: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."[103] The word translated "revelation" is *apokalupsis* in the Greek, which means a "disclosing" or "unveiling" of things previously hidden from view. In his first coming, Christ's divine glory was veiled in human flesh, while in his second coming the veil will be removed that all may see Him as He truly is in all of his glory as the Son of the Living God. Therefore, the stated purpose of this document is to fully reveal Jesus Christ and to inform all of the Lord's servants of things that are to come to pass during the brief interval of time surrounding his second advent. The Lord Jesus Christ sent his angelic messenger to bare record of the Word of God and of the testimony of Christ through various signs that John saw concerning this period of time within a series of visions.

Divine Origin of the Revelation

In verse 1, we find that the Revelation originated with God, the Father, and was declared through the Lord Jesus Christ. It was explained by angelic messengers sent to John, who as we read in verse 2 made it widely available to all of the Lord's servants through this written record. John used the words "to show," which refers to the many "allegorical word pictures" that he used in describing the visions that make up this document. Those "word pictures" include symbols given

[103] cf. Title of the Document in the Introduction on, page 89.

to John by angels, which John in turn recorded as metaphors to represent real things, persons, and events that must take place.

The word "shortly" found in this text is *tachos* in the Greek, which means that all things must occur within a very brief span of time; that is, "quickly" or "speedily" once they begin. It does not imply an immediate beginning of the events unveiled in this document within a matter of hours, days, weeks, or even years. The ultimate fulfillment of those events is yet to take place in a distant future far beyond the Apostles' human lifetimes.

The Beatitude of the 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"** (Re. 1:3).

All of those who read, hear, and then keep the words contained in this document are greatly blessed. This beatitude was given by Jesus in Re. 22:7 and was inserted here by John in order that men may securely store the words of this prophecy within their minds and hearts from the very beginning. However, to "keep the words" does not mean men are to keep this document hidden away from others.[104] This document is intended to be read aloud that others may also hear its words, embrace them, be transformed by them, and present them to still others up until the time that this prophecy is fulfilled.

The Greek word translated "at hand" in this verse is *eggus* which means "near" in the sense that all has been made ready for the events contained within this prophecy to begin at an appointed time.[105] Inasmuch as we have no certainty regarding that appointed time, an urgency is placed upon us to make the words of this prophecy known to every generation in preparation for its eventual fulfillment.

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[104]cf. The Revelation is an Open Text, page 97.

[105] That does not imply immediacy, such that it could have been fulfilled in the lifetimes of Jesus' apostles, as some have falsely assumed (cf. Addendum, Preterism, page 452).

John's Salutation to the Seven Churches

> **"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace** *be* **unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne"** (Re. 1:4).

In this verse, John personally greets the seven churches, to which this document was initially addressed, with the word "grace." While "grace" was a formal means of address in that day, it also implies a warm favor or the imparting of a divine gift. "Asia" is what we refer to today as Asia Minor, and more specifically a western region within the nation now known as Turkey. Those seven churches were all overseen by the Apostle John from the central church located in Ephesus, in which he was its elder pastor.

John's then extends his personal greeting of grace as an offer of peace that is coming from "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come," a reference to God the Father who is an eternal being having no beginning or end. The "seven spirits" represent the Holy Spirit who stands before God's throne in all of his unity, perfection, and completeness,[106]

> **"[5]And from Jesus Christ,** *who is* **the faithful witness,** *and* **the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, [6]and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen"** (Re.1:5-6).

John further expands his personal greeting as also coming from Jesus Christ. In doing so, John certifies this greeting of peace as coming from the entire Godhead. John identifies the Lord Jesus Christ

[106]As we noted in the Introduction, the number seven in Scripture designates fullness or completeness and is used throughout the Revelation in which all things ultimately reach a complete state of fulfillment.

with seven forms of address that are also found elsewhere in Holy Scripture as follows:

1. The faithful witness (cf. Re.3:14).
2. The first begotten of the dead (cf. 1Co.15:20; 1Pe.1:3).
3. The prince of the kings of the Earth (cf. Is. 9:6; Re.19:16).
4. Him who loves us (cf. Jn. 3:16; Ep. 5:2).
5. He who washed us of our sins in his own blood (cf. Col.1:14).
6. He who has made us a kingdom of priests unto God the Father (cf. 1Pe. 2:5,9).
7. He whose glory and dominion is forever (cf. Da. 7:14; 1Pe. 5:11; Jude v 25).

John's Brief Preamble to the Prophecy

In the next two verses John inserts a brief preamble into his greeting concerning the glory and future return of the Lord Jesus Christ, which provides the background for this document. Within it is a stern warning to those Gentiles who have pierced Him on the cross and to all of those Jews and Gentiles alike who oppose and dread his future appearing:

> **"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"** (Re.1:7).

Jesus Christ is again coming to the earth cloaked within the same bright clouds of Heaven in which He had earlier ascended:

> ***"[9]And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. [10]And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; [11]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"*** (Ac. 1:9-11).

In his Olivet Discourse[107] the Lord Jesus had predicted that He, the Son of man, would appear in the "clouds of Heaven with power and great glory" as a sign signifying his imminent return to earth:

> ***"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"*** (Mt.24:30; cf. Mk 13:26; Da. 7:13)**.**

Upon the appearance of this sign of the Son of man in Heaven, every eye shall see and recognize Him, both Jew and the Gentile. This sign will signal a period of great mourning for the Jew who had previously rejected Him as their Messiah and eternal King, while it will also produce great fear in the greater Gentile population – as those who had "pierced Him."[108] All mankind will tremble at his appearing because of the inevitable wrath of God that must fall upon them for their unremitting hatred and rejection of Jesus as their savior and Lord. Nevertheless, his Church on earth will rejoice inasmuch as their ultimate redemption is near at hand.[109]

The Transcendent Christ

> **"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty"** (Re.1:8).

When the Lord said that He was the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, He was laying claim to his eternal deity in the sense that, as the Eternal One, there can be none before Him and none to follow after Him. He who is speaking here in verse 8 is not the

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[107]cf. Addendum Article, Jesus' Olivet Discourse on page 537

[108]cf. Jn.19:34.

[109]The Church Appears in Heaven, page 215.

Father,[110] but Jesus Christ, the transcendent Lord, who is both God and man as a consequence of a hypostatic fusion that had taken place during his miraculous conception within the womb of Mary (cf. Lu.1:35). As fully God, Christ is eternal as is the Father, while also being fully man through Mary, He became the essential sacrifice to bear man's sin upon the cross.

His transcendence as we state it here means that He is not in anyway limited by the constraints of time, which He has created, but has in fact made use of time to serve his divine purposes. Therefore, the phrase "which is and which was and which is to come" speaks of a division of the aspect of Christ's being with respect to earth-time[111] apart from his eternal deity.

Christ, the Supreme Lord Who Was

The Alpha and Omega[112] who is speaking here in verse 8 is Jesus, the very Word of God who existed before the beginning of all things – who was in fact the creator of all things.[113] As the Alpha, Christ is the eternal Son of God who long before the beginning of all creation was the *Logos*, the eternal Word. The Apostle John made that fact quite evident in the opening text of his Gospel:

> ***"[1]In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2]The same was in the beginning with God. [3]All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made"***

[110]We should note that the word "Lord" found here in verse 8 is not the Jehovah of the Old Testament, who is consistently referred to in the Old-Testament Scripture as the "LORD" (i.e. all caps). Jehovah God is the God who consistently is; He is the great **I AM**, subsisting apart from time, thus having no discernible past present or future.

[111]cf. Earth-Time, page 669.

[112] The entire New Testament, which testifies of Christ, was written in the Greek alphabet that began with *Alpha* and ended in *Omega*.

[113]cf. Jn. 1:10.

(Jn. 1:1-3).

It is apparent that John is referring to Jesus as the *Logos* when he later spoke of how the Word was made flesh through his incarnation:

> ***"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth"*** (Jn.1:14).

His Apostles had personally beheld the eternal glory of the Lord Jesus as being the only begotten of the Father who was full of grace and Truth. As such, Christ was one and the same with God the Father before all time and therefore was in every sense God, the Almighty, yet indwelling human flesh.

Christ, the Supreme Lord Who Is

As the Alpha and Omega, Christ presently constitutes the entire "alphabet" through which God has spoken into existence everything that is. It is also through the 'alphabet" of the Son that God the Father speaks to mankind in this present age through his written Word – the Holy Scriptures. Jesus Christ is currently sitting at the right hand of the Father where He is redeeming a chosen remnant of mankind to forever reign with Him within a Heavenly realm beyond all space and time.

Christ, the Supreme Lord Who is to Come

Christ, the Supreme Lord, will return to earth as the omega in the fullness of time to receive his completed Church to Himself by transporting Her off of the earth into Heaven to forever be with Him. Christ is the Alpha and Omega, in the sense that He is the author and the finisher of their faith (cf. He.12:2), through which God has made known to his Elect the mystery of his will; namely, that within the dispensation of the fullness of time, Jesus will gather together all things to Himself, such that all of his good pleasure, which He had purposed in Himself, should be fulfilled in Him.

> ***"[8]Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom***

> ***and prudence; [9]Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: [10]That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth;*** *even* ***in him"*** (Ep.1:8-10).

Moreover, Christ has received the authority to rule over the Earth with a "rod of iron" within a future period of time that has been appointed to Him by the Father. He will establish a Millennial Kingdom upon the earth[114] in which He will redeem and train a large company of Jews to serve Him throughout the many ages to come. This thousand-year Kingdom age on earth will be immediately followed by the appearance of a Great White Throne,[115] before which Satan and his demons, as well as all of mankind, who have served him through embracing his iniquity, will be severely judged and sentenced forever to *Ghenna*, a lake of fire[116] that is located within an outer darkness.

This great judgment will be followed by the formation of an eternal Heavenly Kingdom beyond space and time within an entirely New creation[117] wherein only righteousness will reign. Thus, God will have culminated all things together in Christ; both concerning those things which are on Earth as well as those things which are in Heaven.

John Identifies Himself to his Brothers in Christ

> **"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the**

[114]cf. The Millennial Age, page 381.

[115]cf. The Great White Throne Judgment, page 390.

[116]cf. Satan is Cast Into Hell, page 389.

[117]cf. A New Heaven and a New Earth Created, page 397.

> **word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"** (Re. 1:9).

Following his brief Preamble concerning the certain return of Jesus Christ, John the Apostle openly and fully identifies himself to his brothers in Christ,[118] who along with him were with forbearance suffering from the great persecution that had been imposed upon them by the Roman emperor, Domitian (AD 81-96). During that persecution, John had been imprisoned upon the island of Patmos because he had spoken the Word of God openly and had faithfully testified of the divine person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Annunciation of the Glorified Christ

At this place in his document, John tells how he had first encountered Christ as an extremely loud voice, like that of a Trumpet, that was speaking behind him. The great voice announced that He was the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last (cf. Re. 1:8):

> **"[10]I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet [11]Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what thou seest, write in a book, and send** *it* **unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea"** (Re. 1:10,11).

The Lord's Day

Here, the Apostle John stated that he was in the Spirit on the "Lord's Day." Some difficulty is found when translating the Greek expression *kyriake hemera* from which this English translation is taken – especially since this is the only place in the New Testament where this exact expression is found. The adjective *kyriake* could be translated as "royal" or "imperial" and *hemera* as "age" or "day" such that this overall expres-

[118]cf. Introduction: Human Penmanship, page 91.

sion could be interpreted as "Imperial Day,"[119] or even "Venerable Day of the Sun" (i.e. Sunday).

Be that as it may, it could be that John was actually referring to the annual anniversary of the resurrection of Christ (erroneously referred to today as Easter Sunday), but more likely he is referring to the weekly anniversary of the resurrection inasmuch as the adjective *kyriake* is also found in First Corinthians 11:20 where Paul specifically used it in making reference to the Lord's Supper celebration (*hyriakon deipnon*), which in Paul's day was celebrated by the saints weekly.

Spiritual Communication

When John states that he was in the Spirit, he meant that he was communicating within his mind with the Holy Spirit by means of his own spirit. We recall that Jesus had earlier said to his Apostles,

> ***"[12]I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. [13]Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear,*** *that* ***shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come"*** (Jn.16:12,13).

While upon earth, Jesus had many things to say to his Apostles that, as mere mortals, they could not fully comprehend, for spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. However, after they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit who had come to permanently indwell them on the Day of Pentecost,[120] their mind's were opened by the Holy Spirit speaking directly to their own spirit to fully understand spiritual things. The Holy Spirit does not speak to exalt Himself that He should receive worship; rather, He speaks of whatsoever He hears from the throne of the Father and the Son, as He also shows to those He indwells spiritual things that are, as well as things that are yet to come to pass.

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[119]cf. *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament,* Alfred Marshall

[120]cf. Ac. 2:1-4.

In Re.1:10,11, the extremely loud voice instructed John to write down what was about to be revealed to him within a book, and then to send that book to seven specifically named churches which were located in Asia Minor.[121] Those seven specified churches were in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea – the very same churches that John had obediently addressed at the very beginning of this document.[122]

Precisely how John was to personally send this book from the barren island of Patmos to the seven churches is somewhat problematic. There is no evidence that John was ever visited by anyone while on the island of his imprisonment. This is one reason that this author believes that John was likely freed for a brief time near the end of his life by the Emperor Nerva, the successor to the Roman emperor Domitian (cf. Commentary on Re. 10:11, page 251).

The Glorified Christ Revealed

> **"And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks"** (Re. 1:12).

When John turned to see the source of the great voice that had spoken to him, he first saw seven golden candlesticks. The seven golden candlesticks in this verse remind us of the golden lamp-stand found within the Temple that had seven branches. Here the lamp-stand is presented as seven burning lamps branching out from Jesus Christ who stood up as its center support:

> **"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks** *one* **like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle"** (Re. 1:13).

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[121] cf. Illustration 6: Cities of the Seven Churches, page 434).

[122] cf. John's Salutation to the Seven Churches, page 112.

Christ is described here as the "Son of man," who is standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. "Son of man" is the title that Jesus most commonly ascribed to himself[123] as He conversed with his Disciples here on earth. This unique title identifying Him as the Incarnate Christ was much earlier revealed to the prophet Daniel in a night vision:

> ***"[13]I saw in the night visions, and, behold,*** *one* ***like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. [14]And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion*** *is* ***an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom*** *that* ***which shall not be destroyed"*** (Da.7:13,14).

In still another vision Daniel saw Christ, the Son of man, in his glorified form much as John sees Him here in the Revelation:

> ***"[5]Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins*** *were* ***girded with fine gold of Uphaz: [6]His body also*** *was* ***like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude"*** (Da.10:5,6).

Returning to the text of Re. 1:13, we observe that the Son of man's white garment was similar to that of the Jewish high priest who had served within an earthly Temple under the Old Covenant (cf. Ex. 28:2-4). The golden girdle, which was a sash worn across his chest, was likewise worn by Levitical priests of the Old Covenant (cf. Ex.28:4), but here it speaks of Christ as our great Heavenly High Priest who unlike the mortal Levitical High Priest forever intercedes for his own before the throne of God (cf. He.4:14; 1Ti.2:5).

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[123]cf. Mt. 8:20;9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32; 13:41; 16:13,27, 28; etc.

> **"[14]His head and** *his* **hairs** *were* **white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes** *were* **as a flame of fire [15]and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters"** (Re. 1:14,15).

The Son of man's white hair speaks of divine dignity gained through vast age, or in this instance an ancient heritage of days without beginning – identifying Him as being united as one with the Father, the Ancient of Days (cf. Da. 7:9). His fiery eyes penetrates into the depths of men's minds and hearts and is as well capable of seeing into the endless future. His feet, which are as of red hot brass, speaks of his firm judgment inasmuch as one day He will in righteous anger trample all of his enemies beneath his feet. His voice had the power and volume of many voices that far exceeded the sound of the greatest waterfall found anywhere upon the earth.[124]

> **"And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance** *was* **as the sun shineth in his strength"** (Re. 1:16).

The seven stars that Christ held in his right hand suggests his power over the host of the infinite universe that He rules over, but here they specifically represent seven angels, or seven messengers, that aid Him in the divine governance of his Church (cf. Re. 1:20).

The two-edged sword coming out of Christ's mouth is the very Word of God,

> ***"For the word of God** is **quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and** is **a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"*** (He. 4:12).

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[124]With this powerful voice, Jesus will one day call down for his Church, resurrecting the dead in Christ, and transforming both the dead and the living in one body to ever be with Him in Heaven (cf. 1Th.4:16,17).

The Word of God spoken by Christ has the ultimate power to severely judge, as well as the power to fully justify those who hear his voice, for He is able to discern the thoughts and intentions within the hearts of men.

The Son of Man's face was as the brightness of the earth's sun in its fully revealed brilliance, which no mortal man can long gaze upon lest he become permanently blinded. The effect that blinding brightness had upon John was immediate:

> **"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last"** (Re. 1:17).

Since the time that John was but a little older than a young boy, he had been a close companion of the Lord Jesus as he walked with Him upon the earth during his earthly ministry. John, as a young man, was at the foot of the cross when Jesus was crucified (cf. Jn 19:26,27), and he again saw Him after his resurrection before He had ascended to his Father.

Yet, none of this had prepared John to look upon the glorified Christ, for now when John attempted to behold Him, his countenance was as bright and blinding as the noon-day sun at its full brilliance. In the presence of Jesus' blazing deity, John was stunned into the likeness of death. As the prophet Malachi had rhetorically asked,

> ***"... who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he** is **like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap"*** (Mal. 3:2).

John was now openly viewing deity in the person of Jesus Christ who had been exceedingly glorified and transfigured. His appearance is as one who purifies metal in fire and a fullere who uses powerful soap to clean and press raw woolen cloth. John saw in Him glory and power beyond all human comprehension, which had caused him to immediately fall with his face to the ground.

In like manner, we read that the prophet Daniel, upon seeing the pre-incarnate glorified Christ in a vision many centuries before, had

found himself standing empty and helpless before Him. Any seemliness about himself had rotted away into corruption, thus causing him to likewise fall with his face to the ground. In Daniel's own words we read,

> ***"[8]Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. [9]Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground"*** (Da. 10:8,9).

A like vision of deity had the same effect upon the prophet Ezekiel when the heavens had opened up by the river *Chebar* and he saw the astounding glory of God. Ezekiel likewise was unable to stand before Him or even to look upon Him; such that he likewise fell with his face to the ground (cf. Ez.1:26–28).

All men are rightly stunned when coming face-to-face with Deity, for a sinful man finds observing such great glory and perfection unbearable (cf. Lu. 5:8). Falling upon ones face into the dust of the ground is the most helpless and humiliating position one can take, for it reminds us that in God's sight we are all but dust (cf. Ge.2:7). God's glory and holiness necessarily blinds the eyes, for no mortal man is worthy to openly observe the face of the Holy God and live through that experience (cf. Ex.33:20).

Returning to our text in Re. 1:17, John's stunning vision suddenly becomes stark reality as Jesus places his right hand upon him and spoke the familiar words, "fear not," which He had so often spoken to his Apostles when He was here upon the earth.[125]

> **"***I am* **he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death"** (Re. 1:18).

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[125]cf. Mt.10: 26, 28, 31; Lu. 5:10; 8:50; 12:7,32; 18:4.

Jesus assures John that He is the same Jesus that was once alive upon the earth, and was also dead for a brief time. Then, Jesus told John to closely lay his eyes upon Him and see for himself that He was not only alive, but gloriously alive evermore. Through his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus demonstrated that He had obtained absolute power over the grave and of Hades.[126] Jesus has fully conquered death, and He now holds the keys to unlock the grave and release all the souls of the Old-Covenant saints who had previously been held captive within the paradise region of Hades.[127]

John is Commanded to Write

Then, Jesus revealed the express purpose for his appearing to John, which was to have him write a document to be delivered to the Seven Churches concerning the glorified Christ and many other things that were to be revealed to him within a series of Heavenly visions.

> **"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter"** (Re. 1:19).

John is commanded by the glorified Christ to write down things encompassing three different periods of time. This command provides us who now have this document in a printed form with an overall view of the Revelation as being chronologically separated into three major divisions:

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[126] It must be noted that the word translated "Hell" in this verse is translated from the Greek word "Hades," the transitory place where the unsaved souls of men go when they die to await the coming judgment. (cf. Addendum Article: The Intermediate State of the Dead, page 600). Hades is not Hell, which is a lake of fire located within an outer darkness and is the place of eternal torment.

[127] It is believed by this author that when Jesus ascended into Heaven He took those Old-Covenant saints that had been held captive in the paradise region of Sheol following along after Him in his train. (cf. Ep.4:8).

Three Major Divisions of the Revelation

The first major division contains the things that John had just seen, which was the Lord Jesus Christ in all of his Heavenly glory. Although this first division, fitted within the first Chapter, represents but a small portion of this entire Revelation, it is extremely significant; inasmuch as, it sets the agenda and basis for the remainder of the book. The book of the Revelation is a fully Christ-centered prophecy, which begins with the unveiling of Jesus' deity, and continues on with an unveiling of both his Heavenly domain, the great work that He is carrying out in this present age as the sole head over his Church, as well as his absolute authority over all things that are to take place in the future.

The second major division constitutes the "things that are;" that is, those things that were in Heaven and upon earth within John's lifetime. This period represents the greater Church-age, which began with the creation of the Church on the day of Pentecost and now extends forward into the age in which we currently live.

A cross-section representing the Church-age on earth in John's day, and as it presently exists, is revealed to us in Chapters 2 and 3 of John's prophecy. Jesus' Heavenly domain is revealed in Chapter 4, and the express authority granted Him to direct future events upon the earth to its inevitable climax is received as a sealed scroll from God the Father in Chapter 5.

The third major division begins in Chapter 6 as we begin to read of "the things that shall be hereafter." This division begins as the Antichrist comes forth to reign over the earth. In that day, Jesus Christ will set great events into motion beginning with the sealing of a faithful remnant of Israel (cf. Re. 7:1-8) immediately followed by the transport of his beloved Church off the earth (cf. Re. 7:9-17; 1Th. 4:16,17), in preparation for his second coming to judge the reprobate and to establish his rightful reign over the earth.

When the Lord Jesus' returns to judge the earth, He will bring this present age to an abrupt close through a series of catastrophic judgments (cf. Re.8:6 – Re.18:24); following which, He will gather a rem-

nant of Israel and a remnant of surviving Gentile nations together into a thousand-year Kingdom-age upon the earth (cf. Re.20:1-6).

As the Kingdom Age comes to an end, the Great White Throne judgment will take place (cf. Re. 20:11-15). in which the reprobate of the earth will be judged; after which the eternal ages of redeemed mankind living in Heaven will begin (cf. Re. 21:1 -22:5).

As we progress into our study of this great document, we shall observe all of those future events briefly mentioned here take place in stark detail one after another; but for now, let us return to the beginning of the second major division of the text in Revelation Chapter 1 verse 20:

Christ's Supreme Authority over His Church

> **"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"** (Re. 1:20).

Here Jesus reveals to John the mystery of the seven candlesticks and the seven stars. The seven stars that Jesus holds in his right hand are seven messengers, which had been appointed to inform the seven churches. We saw earlier that Jesus stood in the midst of those seven candlesticks representing the totality of all churches upon the earth (cf. Re.1:13,20).[128] In his right hand, He held the messengers (i.e. angels/stars) that He sent to inform the churches of his divine will. Those messengers represent a greater number of the the Elect that cannot be plucked out of his hand (cf. Jn.10:28,29). The light of Truth, which comes forth from those seven messengers, is the fire-filled light of God's perfect glory; the oil that fuels them is the Holy Spirit who fully indwells them.

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[128]As we saw in our Introduction to the Revelation on page 99 the number seven represents perfection in the sense of completeness.

The Lord Jesus is both the creator as well as the source of divine Light and Truth for all the churches that reside upon the earth. As Jesus is the Light of the world, each of those churches are intended to be a subordinate light shining forth within a darkened world to reach the lost. Therefore, the validity of today's temporal churches exists only within their close spiritual relationship with Christ through their elect Church members who illuminate and draw other men's minds to Christ's presence. When that close relationship with the Elect is lost or rejected, and men attempt to usurp Jesus' authority as Lord for themselves, Jesus with divine right must remove that temporal church from his presence as its Light of Truth is extinguished (cf. Re.2:5). ○

Revelation Chapter 2

In this second chapter, we shall begin to discuss in some detail "the things that are," which must be divided into the "things that are" on earth, and "the things that are" in Heaven.[129] Beginning in this Chapter and concluding in Chapter 3, John specifically writes about the "things that are" as they relate to the current Church age on earth. This vast age had its early beginning in the First Century AD and will continue onward until the true Church is one day removed from the earth.[130]

The Church Age on Earth

In Chapter 1 of the Revelation, Jesus had spoken of seven churches in the present tense: "…the seven candlesticks which thou sawest <u>are</u> the seven churches" (Re.1:20 emphasis added). Those candlesticks specifically referred to seven temporal churches of that day, which were located within seven cities of Asia Minor, each of which were identified by the city in which they had been established (cf. Re.1:11,20).[131]

Historic Aspect of the Seven Churches

The church at Jerusalem had been dispersed before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, such that many churches had been founded in the far flung regions beyond Israel that are not mentioned here in the Revelation.[132] Therefore, we must reasonably conclude that Jesus specifi-

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[129] The "things that are in Heaven" during this same period will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

[130] cf. 1Th. 4:16,17; Article: The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church, page 492.

[131] The geographic region in which the cities of the seven churches were located is now the western part of the present-day nation of Turkey (cf. map Illustration 6, page 434).

[132]Those seven churches were early institutional temporal churches, many of which had been established by the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys. We note however that Jesus makes no mention of the missionary church at Antioch of Syria or of any of the many other first-century churches, such as Paul's beloved church at Philippi and various others that he had established

cally chose the seven churches that remained under the oversight of the beloved Apostle John as a representation, as a historic cross-section, or as a microcosm of all of Christianity as it existed on earth near the end of the first century. All of those first-century churches were struggling to hold fast to the true apostolic faith in times of severe external persecution, pervasive doctrinal error, and internal strife that threatened their very existence. In today's world all of those seven churches have passed on into history, and any remaining evidence of their existence is now found only in ancient ruins.

Contemporary Aspect of the Seven Churches

Nevertheless, the struggle against evil, persecution, and error that those early churches encountered continues on, and the evidence of that struggle remains in the text of the Revelation for our edification and admonition. Those seven ancient churches provide us with a "mirror" in which we can see a reflection of our present-day struggle to maintain doctrinal Truth within a fallen world. As we examine each church in turn, we shall point out how each one of those seven churches exists as a "type" within a greater cross-section of the complex array of temporal churches existing in our present day. This is quite evident in today's Denominationalism as well as in the many doctrinal differences and practices that are found within many individual nonsectarian churches. While there were still a few sound churches at the end of the first century, there were also those who had abandoned the faith, as well as some who were in great danger of doing so – as is the case today.

Future Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Churches

Prophetically, we can also recognize the dominance of one particular "type" of the seven churches, as we move through various periods of church history, beginning with the early first century church and leading up and into the present day. Each of those dominant churches can be seen to mirror one of the seven first-century churches. A rough time-line demonstrating this prophetic aspect of the seven churches is presented

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during his missionary journeys.

below, which begins at AD 30 and continues on beyond our present age.[133]

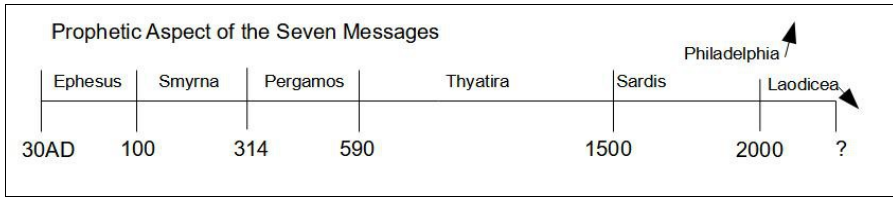

Illustration 1: Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Churches

The distinctive character and order in which the first-century churches are addressed in the text of the Revelation strikes a notable parallel with well-documented dominant churches existing within more recent historic church periods, such that this prophetic aspect cannot be easily dismissed. The year 30 AD[134] corresponds to the "birth date" of the Church on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the year 100 roughly corresponds to the death of the Apostle John, which brought the apostolic period to an end. The year 314 corresponds to the satanically motivated takeover of the Church by the Roman emperor Constantine, and the year 590 marks the beginning of the Roman papacy with Gregory I. The year 1500 approximates the beginning of the *Protestant Reformation Movement*,[135] and the year 2000 marks the end of the twentieth century.[136] The "?" at the end of the timeline marks an unknown future date corresponding to the end of the present church age – at which time the Lord Jesus will remove his

[133]The dates applied to these periods are not hard and fast, but are intended as benchmarks that generally correspond to events that took place within church history. Some periods of church dominance overlap these dates as one type gives way to another.

[134]Jesus had lived within mortal flesh upon the earth for 33 years when He was crucified. Nevertheless, due to ancient calendar anomalies concerning the actual birth date of Christ, Jesus' death and resurrection, as well as the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, took place in AD 30 according to our current calendar.

[135]cf. *CRC* Book III Chapter 18.1.

beloved Church from the earth to abide with Him in the Heavenly realm.

As we continue into our study of the seven churches found in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3, we shall have cause to refer back to the timeline above as we discuss the specific characteristics of each first-century church projected forward as to its "type" into a dominant temporal church existing within a specific period of church history.

The Seven Cities of the Seven Churches

The seven first-century churches of Asia Minor that were addressed by Jesus within a series of messages and were recorded by John in the Revelation document were located within the Asian cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos (or Pergamum), Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.[137] Each of those cities have specific characteristics that are often alluded to in Jesus' messages to the churches and are so noted in this Commentary.

Nevertheless, we have chosen not to insert extensive information concerning those cities into our Commentary lest it obstruct the significance and flow of the messages themselves. Instead, we have included a separate Article entitled *Cities of the Seven Churches* on page 434 of the Addendum, wherein we have provided an historical profile for each of the seven cities. These profiles are individually referenced by page number within this Commentary.

Jesus' Messages to the Seven Churches

We find that Jesus consistently addressed individual believers in those seven churches as "he who overcomes," and "he who can hear." Those men were most assuredly the Elect making up the true "visible Church" that existed within those seven temporal churches, yet were set

[136] A broad overview of Church History in which these periods are discussed can be found in *Comprehensively Reformed Christianity,* Book III, the full text of which is currently available to read on our Internet site: www.CRChristianity.org.

[137]This area is now within the western portion of the modern nation of Turkey (cf. Map page 434).

apart spiritually from the larger organization itself. Even so, Jesus did not address his Elect alone; He addressed entire assemblies, consisting of all professed believers who had claimed his Name, within each of seven cities of Asia Minor at the time that John wrote the book of the Revelation. Not all of those professions were true, and many who claimed Christ were actually in opposition to Christ (i.e. anti-Christ).

Inasmuch as each of those churches exhibited uniquely different spiritual characteristics from that of the others, we know that there was already a great lack of unity within the Christian faith as to both an understanding of the Truth, and within religious practices. We find that fact clearly revealed in Jesus' own words, as they are recorded in this series of brief messages. Commendations issued by Jesus in those brief messages were intended to be encouragements to those churches that seriously strove for perfection in the true faith, while the warnings were given to those that had fallen away – in order that they should repent. Mixed remarks were reserved for those churches who although yet reasonably sound in the faith were nonetheless in danger of sliding into an open abyss of apostasy if they did not repent and hold fast to divine Truth.

Since each of those messages were part of the larger circular document that would ultimately be read within all of the seven churches, we find that each of Jesus' individualized messages were also directed, in general, to all of the churches on earth for their edification. Therefore, we can reasonably assume that the individual churches mentioned in those messages represent a descriptive cross-section of the church extending forward into every age – including present-day churches.[138]

The "Angels" of the Seven Churches

Each of the seven messages was specifically directed to an "angel" of each church. The Greek word *angelos* translated as "angel" in these

[138] We cannot merely assume that these brief messages were written only for the purpose of encouraging and warning the churches of the first century, inasmuch as they have been carefully preserved in Scripture so that we may also read them and readily compare them with our own assemblies today.

messages can be more generally translated as "messenger." Most likely, those couriers were elect believers whom John had previously appointed as overseers (i.e. Elders) to directly preside over each of those churches. Thus, each messenger was sent forth with a complete copy of the Revelation document for the purpose of edifying the congregation of their church not only through the message that Jesus had specifically addressed to them, but as a means of informing them of the broader condition of the church at large – and also to make them aware of things that must ultimately come to pass in the future (cf. Re. 1:1).

Although two of the seven churches only received cordial commendations from Christ in these messages, two others only incurred his very strong disapproval. The remaining three churches received mixed reviews, along with the Lord Jesus' stern warning for them to repent of that which He disapproved.

With the foregoing text as an introduction, we shall now begin an exposition of the inspired text of Chapter 2 of the Revelation, wherein we shall examine individual messages that Christ gave to the first four of the seven churches in turn, which are the churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira.[139]

Jesus' Message to the Church of Ephesus

The first church that Jesus addressed was the church that was established by the Apostle Paul and Apollos within the city of Ephesus.[140] The city of Ephesus was located in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) on the coastline of the Aegean Sea.[141] This was the central church of the seven churches and the home-church of its current pastor in exile, the Apostle

[139] Jesus' messages to the last three churches at Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea are found in Chapter 3.

[140] cf. Ac. 18:19-28; 19:26.

[141] cf. map on page 434 and a description of The Ancient City of Ephesus, page 435.

John, who, as we read earlier, was also the human scribe of this document of the Revelation.[142]

> **"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks"** (Re. 2:1).

The Lord Jesus identifies himself to the Elder/messenger of the church at Ephesus as the one who holds the "seven stars in his right hand" and walks in the "midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Re.1:20). Jesus needed to remind this central church, in John's absence, that He alone is the true head of the Church. It is He who holds all of their messengers in his hand, and who walks about in their midst to guide them as one. Although this is in one sense a note of assurance, it is also a warning that they must fully concede to his divine authority in all things, lest the light of God's Truth emanating forth from them be extinguished.

> **"[2]I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: [3]And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted"** (Re.2:2,3).

Jesus knew of their diligent efforts and how they had patiently labored to maintain the purity of the true apostolic faith under extremely difficult circumstances. They could not bear them that are evil, and would not endure evil men coming into their congregation. They had borne all things for Christ's namesake with great patience and firm determination. Obviously, they had heeded the warning given to them earlier by the Apostle Paul at Miletus to carefully test all of those who claimed to be apostles of Christ and to carefully weed out those who were false professors:

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[142] Nevertheless, John makes no mention of this relationship as he accurately records Jesus' message to this church.

> ***"[29]For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. [30]Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. [31]Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears"*** (Ac.20:29–31).

In all of this they had persevered and had not given in to false doctrines coming from outside their flock, nor had they accepted false doctrines devised by those within their own ranks.

> **"Nevertheless I have** *somewhat* **against thee, because thou hast left thy first love"** (Re.2:4).[143]

While the Ephesian church had worked diligently against evil, it had soon done so out of a sense of duty, not out of their love for Christ. They had left their best and first love which they had reserved for Him, when they had first received their redemption in Him. Christianity is essentially a love[144] relationship established between Christ and his Church. As the Lord Jesus had said to all that would follow Him, "if ye love me keep my commandments" (Jn.14:15).

Love, the Greatest Commandment

During his ministry on earth, Jesus was asked by a scribe what He considered to be the greatest commandment of all,

> ***"[29]And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments** is**, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: [30]and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this** is **the first commandment. [31]and the second is like,** namely **this,***

[143]This is an astounding statement inasmuch as based upon the text of his three epistles, John, their pastor, is commonly known as the apostle of love.

[144] The Greek word for love as we use it here is *agape* – the highest form of love, a divine love as it is specifically found within the Godhead.

> ***Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these"*** (Mk.12: 29-31; cf. De. 6:5).

Therefore, it is the divine love that Christ has for us that compels obedience and constrains us in all that we do (cf. 2Co.5:14). Truly, we love Him because He first loved us, and into that divine love relationship He called us to Himself (cf. 1Jn.4:19). That love is a divine gift of God bestowed upon us through his Son, as he died for our sins on the cross.

Nevertheless, just as human marriage can be founded in wondrous abounding love, that initial love can fade once the day-to-day effort of living the married life in the practical sense continues on over many years – unless one is diligent to maintain that first relationship. The church at Ephesus was slowly losing that first and best love out of abject neglect.

Moreover, divine love subsists as a mutual love between all of those who are truly in Christ. Biblical truth is all important to the believer; nevertheless, the strong necessity to defend and hold to strict orthodoxy can overtime make one cold and indifferent to the needs of other believers who are struggling in the faith. Doing so moves us farther away from that divine love relationship with each other – and ultimately with Christ. As the Apostle Paul said, love must be much more than mere words loudly spoken,

> ***"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not* [*love*]*, I am become** as **sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal"*** (1Co.13:1).

The diligent efforts of the Ephesian church to be obedient to the Truth had overtime nearly smothered their love for Christ. Obedience to Christ must be wrought about in love, not apart from love out of a harsh sense of religious duty.

> "**Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out**

of his place, except thou repent." (Re.2:5).

This church is admonished to remember their best first love from which they were in danger of falling away and to turn again to do those things that divine love had required of them. If they should not repent, Jesus warns them that he will suddenly remove the church of Ephesus out of its place as a bright light of Truth unto the world.

The Hated Deeds of the Nicolaitans

"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Re. 2:6).

Nicolaitans[145] are first mentioned here in this message to the church at Ephesus and again within Jesus' message to the church at Pergamum (cf. Re.2:15). The Nicolaitans were evidently a corrupt self-indulgent priesthood that sought to elevate themselves above the laity of the Church (perhaps through the exercise of exclusive Sacramentalism). They sought after their own gainful material reward as did the prophet Balaam of old, and by example they taught the people to commit adultery with the world through unrestrained gratification of the flesh in the manner of the Epicureans, who were devoted to sensuous pleasure.

The English word "hate" found in this verse is translated from the Greek word *miseō* meaning to "detest" – or by extension to "hate." Hate is a very strong word; it is the very antithesis of love, and as such is self-destructive of those who harbor it. As Christians, we are commanded to unconditionally love one another as Christ has loved each of us who as sinners were most unlovely.[146]

Nevertheless, divine love carries along with it a sanctified hatred of anything that would seek to diminish or destroy our love for other Christians; or would oppose God's love for us. David, the Psalmist, described this sanctified hatred of the wicked of his day as follows,

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[145]It is possible that this faction was founded by an apostate proselyte of Antioch named Nicolas who is mentioned in Acts 6:5 as a possible candidate to replace Judas Iscariot, but that is far from being certain.

[146]cf. Jn.13:34;15:12,17; Ga.5:13;1Pe.1:22;1Jn.3:23; etc.

> ***"[19]Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. [20]For they speak against thee wickedly,*** *and* ***thine enemies take*** *thy name* ***in vain. [21]Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? [22]I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies"*** (Ps.139:19-22).

Even so, believers in the Ephesian church hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, as did Jesus, and this was to their credit. It must be noted that the Nicolaitans as mentioned in verse 6 actually hated God, inasmuch as their detestable deeds opposed and sought to destroy true Christian love and fellowship.

That said, we must diligently seek to reach out to others who are ignorantly caught up in sinful errors, even as we vehemently hate and oppose the sin that consumes them.

> ***"[22]And of some have compassion, making a difference: [23]and others save with fear, pulling*** *them* ***out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh"*** (Jude vv. 22,23).

This characterizes the atheist and agnostic, as well as many others found within isolated people-groups world-wide who have not had the opportunity to hear the biblical Gospel of redemption such that they too may be saved through Christ.

Jesus closed his message to the Church at Ephesus with these words:

> **"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God"** (Re.2:7).

The phrase, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" is repeated at the end of each one of Jesus' messages to the seven churches. The Lord Jesus wants all of the churches to hear and understand what He saying not only to their own church, but also to each of the other churches for their broader edification.

Men are born with physical ears with which to hear, but they do not always listen or understand the words being said because of their closed minds. Jesus speaks of those who have a spiritual discernment not only to hear but to understand his words. These are the Elect, those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who takes the things of Christ and makes them real and vital to our minds (cf. Mt.13:16; Lu.8:10).

The individual believer who through the indwelling Holy Spirit overcomes all the difficulties and obstacles to their faith in this life shall "eat of the tree of life" and shall dwell in "the paradise of God."[147] In this verse we see Jesus, the second Adam, reversing the curse of death that all men had received through the first Adam. He promises to all of those who overcome the trials of this life through faith in Him, that one day they shall partake of the tree of eternal life; which was tragically lost to Adam, but will be restored anew for them within a future Paradise.[148]

Contemporary Aspect of the Church of Ephesus

The church in Ephesus can be compared with many of our formal main-line Protestant churches today. They are proactive in producing good works, and they are very careful to emphasize correct biblical doctrine. As did the church in Ephesus, they firmly hold to strict moral discipline and fiercely hate evil. They diligently test the teaching of every man who enters into their midst against God's Word, and they reject all false professors. Furthermore, they hold to rigid time-honored traditions in their corporate worship services that are quite proper in all matter of practice.

Unfortunately, that strict adherence to correct doctrine and practice has over time become frozen into a routine formality no longer having

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[147] Before Adam sinned, he had been free to partake of the tree of life, which grew in the earthly paradise of Eden. When Adam sinned, God removed him from that paradise to live in a hostile environment of briers and thistles wherein thee tree of life was absent. No longer was Adam able to partake of life, such that death ultimately ruled over him.

[148] cf. The Tree of Life, page 414.

any genuine meaning. Because of their rigid adherence to form and their wariness of doctrinal error, many of these churches have lost the spiritual fervor that was initially born in a heart-felt love of Christ. In its place they have adopted a prideful form of institutionalized legalism to rule over them; such that even should Jesus appear in their very midst, they would continue on in their strict liturgy as if nothing had happened.

Outwardly, those main-line churches continue to display their good works, but beneath it all they lack any genuine concern for the lost who have not yet heard the Gospel, or for any believers who do not ascribe to their strict adherence to religious form. As individual members of the greater body of Christ, they have lost their personal love for Him, as well as their love for one another as fellow sojourners in Christ. Rather than lovingly and patiently guiding immature believers to understand and ultimately to accept genuine biblical Truth, they summarily dismiss them as being ignorant and condemn them outright as reprobates. In doing so, their love for Jesus and his counsel to love one another has severely waned over the years.

Few if any of us could boast that our love for Jesus is as strong as it could be, and indeed should be, in view of all that He has done for us – as the Gospel itself fully attests (cf. Jn.3:16; Ro.5:8; 1Co.15:1-4). Our personal salvation is based solely upon a divine love relationship that we have with Christ (1Jn.4:19), which has come about through a spiritual rebirth from above (cf. 1Pe.1:23). Sadly, many of today's main-line churches neglect the importance of this close personal relationship with Christ and with each other within the body of Christ. If we truly love Jesus, we cannot withhold the Truth from any of his immature "lambs" who hungrily seek after it, in order to satisfy our sinful denominational pride.

Prophetic Aspect of the Church of Ephesus

The Ephesus church represented, as to type, the church that had received the direct spoken teaching of the apostles and had dominated the early first century.[149] They had at first received the Gospel with great fer-

[149]cf. Illustration 1: Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Churches, page 131.

vor and with an overwhelming love for Christ. Yet, by the end of the first century AD, all of the Apostles of Christ had left the earthly scene through death. While other redeemed men had taken their place, they lacked the first-hand authority of the Apostles who had personally known and walked with the Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

Moreover, the church's battle against the forces of evil in their day had greatly thinned their ranks through persecution, imprisonment, and death. Diligently seeking out and combating error had so occupied their minds that they had concentrated their efforts in opposing the rampant evil about them while neglecting that which was good and honorable to the name of Christ. They had become so preoccupied with eradicating error in each other that their love for fellow believers was largely lost and along with it their divine love for Christ as well (cf. Mt.7:3–5).

Jesus' Message to the Church of Smyrna

We shall now direct our attention to the text of Jesus' message to the church at Smyrna. The city of Smyrna was located about 35 miles northwest of Ephesus. Like Ephesus, Smyrna was an important port city on or very near the coast of the Aegean Sea.[150] As we study this text, we shall find that this church received no condemnation from Jesus, but rather had received his encouragement, great warmth, and deep understanding.

> **"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;"** (Re. 2:8)

Jesus identifies himself here with the earlier vision of the glorified Christ as "the first and the last" (cf. Re.1:11) and the one who was dead, but now lives forever. He reminds them that He has the keys to the grave and to death itself (cf. Re.1:18). This reminder is very appropriate for this church to hear, for it found itself in the midst of great testing and persecution that would ultimately lead to its martyrdom. Jesus reminds them that although they may need to die for their faith, they will yet live on in Him throughout all eternity.

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[150]cf. map on page 434 and description of The Ancient City of Smyrna, on page 438.

> **"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and** *I know* **the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but** *are* **the synagogue of Satan"** (Re.2:9).[151]

Although poor in material goods as a consequence of intense persecution, Christians living in Smyrna were very rich spiritually; they not only held tenaciously to the Truth; but unlike the church at Ephesus, they had also maintained their divine love for Jesus and for each other.

Jesus knew all about the persecutions that they continued to suffer, which were being perpetrated by a large Jewish community residing in Smyrna. Jerusalem and its Temple had been demolished some twenty-five years before, and the people of Israel had been scattered abroad. What was left for the surviving Jews to believe had become a corruption of the religion of Judaism that lacked any atonement for sin. In their great anger, Jews hated Christians because they worshiped Jesus as the Messiah (i.e. the Christ), whom they had vehemently rejected and had vociferously insisted that He be crucified (cf. Lu.23:21).

Moreover, many of those Jews were actually Greeks that only claimed to be Jews; they were not genuine in any sense. Jesus referred to all of them collectively as "the synagogue of Satan," not the synagogue of Jehovah that they falsely claimed to be. Their deceitful claims constituted blasphemy. This Jewish population in Smyrna was most likely ferreting out Christians and reporting them to the Roman authorities as being subversive to the rule of Rome – a charge that was patently false.

> **"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast** *some* **of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (**Re.2:10).

The city of Smyrna was at the center of emperor worship that had begun in AD 25 when the Roman Senate authorized the building of tem-

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[151]"We note here that the word "works" found here in the *AKJV* is not included in many of the better manuscripts (cf. *ASV*, *NIV*, and *NASB* translations).

ples to honor Tiberius Caesar. Once a year each citizen was ordered to offer up incense to Caesar as an indication of their loyalty. If they refused to do so, they were thrown into prison[152] and given ten days to repent or suffer the pain of death. Many devout Christians in Smyrna could not give in to this order – even as an empty political gesture. This had resulted in many of them being martyred – particularly so during the years AD 81 to 96 during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian.[153]

> **"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death"** (Re. 2:11).

Again, we find Jesus speaking directly to his Elect that have "an ear to hear" that they take close notice of what He is saying to the seven churches. While they may indeed need to suffer separation from their bodies for the sake of Christ through mortal death, He promises them that they will never suffer the second death, which is the separation of men's souls from a compassionate and loving God in a state of everlasting torment specifically reserved for the reprobate in Hell.[154]

Contemporary Aspect of the Church of Smyrna.

The church of Smyrna is representative of many of today's churches whose members are hated and persecuted for their child-like faithfulness and their tenacious loyalty to Christ. Unlike the church of Ephesus, many of those churches lack a strict declaration of Truth. Therefore, they have not employed legalism in a hateful effort to root out every potential error in each other. While they are not tolerant of evil, they are patient

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[152]The Roman Caesar, under whose authority they had been thrown into prison, is referred to in the inspired text as "the devil" (*diabolos* in the Greek), which is a direct reference to Satan, the slanderer and false accuser who motivates all of his underlings to commit heinous deeds.

[153]Even so, Roman persecution did not end with Domitian; many years later in AD 156, Polycarp, the beloved Bishop of the church at Smyrna and an earlier pupil of the Apostle John, was martyred and burned alive in the stadium at Smyrna. (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 100).

[154] cf. Re. 20:6, 20:14, 21:8.

with fellow believers – seeking to aid them in their many struggles. Accordingly, their fervent love for Christ and for each other in the body of Christ has not waned.

This simple yet faithful church, is not held together with the wealth and influence of prideful worldly members. Rather, it commonly finds itself in an extreme state of material poverty; yet, that impoverished church also finds itself largely purged of the make-believer. Hence, they are rich in the Holy Spirit and in their mutual possession of hope. Although they are poor, yet they are rich: not in the wealth of this world, but in spiritual properties and in the sure hope of the Heavenly treasures that await them.

The members of these churches fear none of the things that they need to suffer for Christ, inasmuch as they eagerly look forward to receiving a "crown of life" that is promised to all who truly believe on the name of the Lord Jesus. Blessed are they for though many have been put to death over the years for their simple persistent faith, none shall ever taste of eternal death.

While a few of these simple faithful churches exist within the United States, they exist in abundance throughout the world – particularly those that have been planted within Communist and Islamic nations. Not many if any pseudo-Christians fill the pews of those churches; they have already deserted, because they were no longer interested in being persecuted for a cause that was not truly their own (cf. 1Jn. 2:19). In times of persecution, the false professor always flees, and in doing so those that remain behind are proved to be genuine as they patiently continue to suffer severe trials through their persecutors. Throughout it all, their God-given faith remains along with their abiding love of Jesus Christ and their overwhelming love for each other within the body of Christ.

Prophetic Aspect of the Church of Smyrna

The church at Smyrna can be seen to represent, as to type, the church that had dominated the period between the years AD 100 to 314.[155] The church in that age was heavily persecuted by the Roman

[155]cf. Illustration 1: Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Churches, page 131.

Empire until an "edict of toleration" was issued in AD 313 by the Roman emperor Constantine.[156] By that time, their ranks had been thinned of many precious souls that had gone on to be with Christ.

Ten waves of persecution had been predicted by Jesus when He said, "and ye shall have tribulation ten days" that referred to a literal ten days of imprisonment (cf. Re. 2:10).

Those "ten days" of tribulation are also exemplified by ten periods in which the church was persecuted by the Roman Empire. Below is a chronological list of ten periods of Roman persecutions designated by the date and name of the Roman Emperor that had initiated them:[157]

1. Nero AD 64–68, the Apostle Paul beheaded (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 62)
2. Domitian AD 81–96, John exiled to Patmos (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 65)
3. Trajan AD 104–117, Ignatius burned at the stake (cf. *CRC* Book III, pages 96 and 114)
4. Marcus Aurelius AD 161–180, Polycarp martyred (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 100)
5. Severus AD 200–211, Irenaeus and Clement martyred (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 125)
6. Maximinius AD 235–237 (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 125)
7. Decius AD 250–253 (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 126)
8. Valerian AD 257–260 (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 126)
9. Aurelian AD 270–275 (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 126)
10. Diocletian AD 303-313, most intense persecution of all (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 128)

Jesus' Message to the Church of Pergamos

After addressing the faithful suffering church in Smyrna, Jesus addressed the church that had been planted within the city of Pergamos

[156] cf. Constantine the Great, *CRC* Book III, page 134-141.

[157] It must be noted that by the time the message to Smyrna was written, the first of those periods had already passed into history, and the second was about to come to an end.

(aka Pergamum), which was located about 18 miles inland from the Aegean Sea and about 50 miles north-east of Smyrna.[158]

> **"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges"** (Re.2:12);

The Lord Jesus identifies himself to the messenger of the church at Pergamos as He whose Words are as a "two-edged sword" (Re.1:16). This was obviously a clear word of warning. The two-edged sword was considered a formidable weapon in those days inasmuch as it cut on both the fore-stroke and the back-stroke as does the Word of God,

> ***"For the word of God** is **quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and** is **a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"*** (He.4:12).

Jesus was clearly pointing out to this church that when he attacked his enemies within their city, they too could easily be cut down by the back stroke if they had in any way inadvertently allied themselves in thought or deed with his enemy.

> **"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest,** *even* **where Satan's seat** *is***: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas** *was* **my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth"** (Re.2:13).

Jesus first commends them, for He knew all about their struggle against evil, inasmuch as they lived where Satan had his headquarters and was worshiped. Notwithstanding, they had held fast to Jesus' name, continuing to call themselves Christians even when it was extremely dangerous for them to do so.

Even in the midst of severe persecution, many had held fast to the true faith leading to their martyrdom. Nothing of any certainty is known

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[158]cf. map on page 434 and description of The Ancient City of Pergamos, on page 439.

about Antipas mentioned in this verse except that his name means "against all," and that he was martyred by the pagan population of the city because of his faithful witness of the Lord Jesus. According to tradition, the Apostle John had ordained Antipas as bishop of Pergamos during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero (AD 54-68). It is also said that Antipas was martyred during Nero's reign by being burned alive in a bull-shaped altar where Satan was worshiped. Perhaps, the occult sanctuary associated with this satanic altar is what Jesus was referring to here in this verse as ""Satan's seat."

> **"[14]But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. [15]So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. [16]Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth"** (Re.2:14–16).

Nevertheless, Jesus was very displeased with them because they had allowed certain men that adhered to the doctrine of Balaam into their congregation. Such men desired wealth more than righteousness (cf. 2Pe. 2:15), which caused them to put mental stumbling-blocks in the way of the spiritual maturity of believers. They advocated idol worship, and encouraged fornication literally within pagan rituals and by marrying outside the faith. This was in accord with the epicurean practices of the Nicolaitans that we discussed earlier when we studied the message to the church at Ephesus (cf Re.2:6). If they did not repent from that ungodly compromise, Jesus said He would come against them with the sharp-edged sword of his powerful Word.

> **"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written,**

which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Re.2:17).

Again, Jesus addresses elect believers within all of the seven churches when He offers to feed those who seek to overcome error and corruption with hidden spiritual food (i.e. *manna*) to sustain them.

Furthermore, Jesus states that He will give him who overcomes a "white stone." A stone represents permanence, and white indicates spiritual purity. Only he who receives that stone will know the name that is written upon it;[159] for it speaks of the deep personal sacrifices and struggles he has encountered as a faithful follower of Christ.

Contemporary Aspect of the Church of Pergamos

The church in Pergamos is representative of many of today's churches that have been planted within corrupt worldly surroundings. While they steadfastly adhere to the name of Jesus and do not outwardly deny his authority, they continually compromise with the evil around them in order to avoid persecution, which repudiates their outward profession of Christ.

Those compromised churches have accepted the teachings of vile professors, who seek after material wealth in a similar way to those within the Pergamos church that held to the doctrine of Balaam. All about us today we encounter religious charlatans, who have sold their souls for money which they have earned by masquerading as church pastors. They do not truly care for the spiritual condition of the flock, but cunningly seek to enrich themselves at their expense. They accom-

[159]While the white stone can be understood to be a stone within the wall of the New Jerusalem, there is some confusion about the "new name" written within the stone. Many have assumed that this is a new name with which Christ will refer to the believer. However, Jesus later said to the church at Philadelphia that the name written on the believer will be the name of God and the New Jerusalem (cf. Re.3:12) thus identifying them as God's personal possession and establishing them as a permanent resident of the New Jerusalem. Christ will also write upon them "his new name" that permanently identifies that believer with Him. This will be a personal name of Christ that only He and his own will know in that day.

plish this by erecting a materialistic stumbling block to their acceptance of the true faith. This is commonly known today as the "prosperity doctrine," which falsely declares that God wants all of his own to become materially rich.[160] While the propensity for the accumulation of great wealth is clearly seen in the overt opulence present in the hierarchy of the *Roman Catholic Church*; it also remains within much of today's Protestantism.

The hated teaching of the Nicolaitans is also found within the contemporary type of the church of Pergamos. Again, we find the propensity for idol worship most prevalent within the *Roman Catholic Church*, especially so in their delusive worship of the virgin Mary.[161] However, much of its idolatry was retained with minor alteration within the *Protestant Reformation Movement*, such that it still persists within many Protestant church denominations as well.

Prophetic Aspect of the Church of Pergamos

Prophetically, the church at Pergamos can be seen to represent the dominant Roman church that had prevailed during the period AD 314 to 590.[162] This period was covered in considerable detail in *Comprehensively Reformed Christianity*, Book III.[163]

During that period encompassing some 275 years, the heavily persecuted church (as is represented by Smyrna) became greatly compromised, as Roman persecution of the true Church was exchanged for a satanic embrace. This came about through the activities of the Emperor Constantine, as the Roman Empire surreptitiously befriended the church that it could not defeat by persecution. In doing so, it soon gained abso-

[160] cf. Newsletter Article December 2014.

[161] cf. Newsletter Article March 2015.

[162] cf. Illustration 1: Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Churches, page 131.

[163] cf. *CRC* Book III Chapter 17.7: "The Roman Political Transition," on page 134 and Chapter 17.9: "The Papal Church Period" beginning on page 176.

lute control over the teaching and function of every aspect of the temporal church from within.

Shortly thereafter, multitudes of unsaved heathen were forced into the Roman church by the Emperor Theodosius.[164] Church worship and practice became infused with paganism and worldliness, as Roman institutionalization began to envelop the true church within a corrupt and monstrous political web. As a consequence of this takeover, biblical Truth was repeatedly compromised to accommodate political whims and expediencies as well as to approve the entry of rank paganism.

Over time, many of those corruptions would become firmly established Roman church traditions that gained dominance over the authority of Holy Scripture, thus adversely affecting all matters of faith and even the Truth of the Gospel itself. Compromise and error are deadly enemies of Truth, eventually rendering those that accept it totally empty of saving faith. Such was the prophetic Roman type of the church of "Pergamos" in the early forth century.

Jesus' Message to the Church of Thyatira

We shall now exposit Jesus' message given to the church that resided in the city of Thyatira. This city was located about 50 miles inland from the Aegean Sea, and about 45 miles east of Pergamos.[165] Although this was geographically the smallest of the seven cities, this is the longest of the seven messages:

> "**And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet** *are* **like fine brass;"** (Re.2:18)

The Lord Jesus identifies himself to the messenger of the church of Thyatira as the "Son of God," and then He goes on to say that He has eyes that are as a flame of fire and his feet are as fine brass burning in a

[164]cf. *CRC* Book III, pages 141-143.

[165]cf. map on page 434 and description of The Ancient City of Thyatira on page 441.

furnace (cf. Re.1:14,15). The fact that Jesus felt the need to identify Himself as the Son of God would tend to indicate that this church may have been denying his deity. Jesus' eyes of fire indicates his righteous indignation against those who deny Him,[166] and Jesus' feet of burnished brass expresses his holy resolve to judge all iniquity rightly and severely by trampling it down beneath his feet.

> **"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last** *to be* **more than the first."** (Re.2:19)

Jesus makes it clear that He knows of their works. He fully understands their acts of charity and service, as well as their faithful patience in carrying them out. More particularly he notes that their works have greatly increased over time, such that they are now even greater than they were at first. Those works would seem to be to their credit – except that all of their efforts have become corrupted by their close association with evil:

> **"[20]Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. [21]And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not** (Re.2:20,21).

Jesus states here that He has a "few things" against them. Nevertheless those "few things" have totally corrupted all of their works. They have allowed a woman to teach evil doctrines and practices through personal seduction in a way similar to that of Jezebel of old.

Jezebel of the Old Testament was the infamous Canaanite wife of Israel's evil king Ahab (cf. 1Ki. 16:30,31). She had led Ahab to worship Baal as well as having led large numbers of others in Israel astray due to her evil position as a high priestess of Baal worship.[167]

In a similar manner, this "Jezebel" of Thyatira "calls herself a prophetess," which means her standing was not ordained by God, but

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[166] This associates well with the fiery red dye produced in this city.

was but self-proclaimed. She outwardly purported herself to be a Christian, while she was in fact an occult diviner who had been elevated to a high position of authority within the church of Thyatira. Her activities constituted spiritual fornication, and her teaching was most likely analogous to that of the Nicolaitans as well as the Balaamites.

Jesus said that He had long given this woman the opportunity to repent of her evil, but she had refused to do so.

> **"[22]Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. [23]And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works"** (Re. 2:22, 23).

This woman had led many other members of the church to commit fornication with her, as they had joined with her in eating polluted foods offered as a sacrifice to idols. Within those activities it is quite probable that physical fornication and adultery were also being committed by her victims.[168] Jesus warns this church that He will greatly increase the tribulation of those who commit spiritual adultery with her – unless they repent. Moreover, He warns that all of those who continue to follow after her evil ways (i.e. "her children") must suffer death in the same manner that her death must ultimately come about.[169]

Through Jezebel's exposure in this message, all of the seven churches will come to realize that the Lord Jesus knows their most secret

[167] Baal of Peor (cf. Nu.25:3) was a Canaanite fertility god who was believed to enable the earth to produce crops and people to produce children. Philistines referred to this same god as Baal-Zebub. cf. Mt. 12:27). Worship of Baal was centered in extreme sensuality involving ritualistic prostitution, which resulted in numerous children. At various times, appeasing Baal required human sacrifice of the firstborn child of the one making the sacrifice (cf. Je. 19:5). Most commonly those sacrifices were the "surplus" infants of ritual harlotry, which were placed in the arms of an idol of Baal that had been heated until it was red hot.

[168]This fornication most likely took place within a sensual ceremony similar to the orgies of Cybele.

thoughts and activities and that He will recompense them according to their works, not their words.

> **"[24]But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. [25]But that which ye have** *already* **hold fast till I come"** (Re.2:24,25).

Nevertheless, even in this corrupt church, some had kept themselves separate and apart from this terrible wickedness, although they were still in constant danger of giving in to it through association. Jesus promises those who had not yielded to those satanic doctrines, that no additional burden would be placed upon them; but having survived thus far against this falsehood, they should hold fast to the Truth "till I come."

> **"[26]And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: [27]And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. [28]And I will give him the morning star. [29]He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."** (Re.2:26–29)

Again the Lord Jesus addresses individual believers within all of the seven churches who are "over-comers" – those who keep his righteous works to the very end. To those He promises power over the enraged Gentile nations, whom He will one day rule over with a rod of iron; He will shatter them into pieces, as does a potter to a hardened faulty vessel.[170]

He promises those who overcome the tempting of the evil-one the "morning star," a title that Satan had once claimed as Lucifer, the "son

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[169] It is likely that physical death of her followers soon came about through eating polluted meat, by contracting venereal disease, or through other afflictions associated with their sinful practices.

[170] This period in which Jesus will one day rule the nations with a rod of iron refers to a future Millennial Kingdom age on earth (cf. Revelation Chapter 20, page 380).

of the Morning." Being interpreted, this is the promise of a new and better day to come as the Son of righteousness, the true Son of the morning, arises with healing in his wings (cf. Mal. 4:2).

Again, the Lord Jesus closes this message with, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Contemporary Aspect of the Church of Thyatira

Many of today's contemporary churches and cults can be compared to the church of Thyatira, who follow a present-day false prophetess in the likeness of the Jezebel of old. The injection of the female principal into Christianity undermines its very foundation, which must be exclusively established upon the eternal Father and the eternal Son of glory.

Feminism always has a corrupting influence upon theological doctrine because of woman's natural submissive nature, which was established in her very creation as she was taken from the side of Adam. The Apostle Paul expressed this natural order in this way,

> ***"[13]For Adam was first formed, then Eve. [14]and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression"*** (1Ti.2:13,14).

Unfortunately, woman's submissive nature to a man's authority also leaves her open to various forms of satanic deception; and through her seductive nature, originally intended to attract herself to one man, her husband, she becomes an active participant in that original transgression through her seductive attraction of other men.

For that reason, the Apostle Paul stated that women should dress modestly, so as not to flaunt their naturally seductive nature before other men, but rather to make her godly presence known through good works that properly extols her inner beauty and true worth given her through creation:

> ***"[9]In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; [10]But (which becometh women professing godliness)***

with good works" (1Ti. 2:9,10).

Moreover, Paul stated that a woman should not attempt to assert herself with seductive speech lest she mimic the ways of Jezebel, but rather she should learn to exhibit her subjection to God's authority through her unpretentious silence within the church:

> ***"[11]Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. [12]But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence"*** (1Ti.2:11,12).

While a woman can and should seek to understand the many doctrines of Christianity, she cannot learn through speaking her own mind, but only in reverent silence and subjection to God's Word. She must never attempt to usurp authority over godly men by claiming a formal teaching or a preaching role within the church, lest in doing so the dreadful image of the Jezebel of old be activated within her.

Many modern-day cults have been founded by women who have defied that warning. Other cults, founded by men, have placed women in positions of leadership that work very arduously for the perpetuation of their false religion, and which seduces many other men into their web. Outwardly, these women appear to care for the welfare of others, even as they diligently strive to seduce them to their corrupt way of thinking.

Most Protestants do not consider the *Roman Catholic Church* a cult, as it exists today, because on the surface we appear to have much in common regarding various essential core doctrines. Even so, most early cultist errors such as Mariolatry still persist deep within Roman church tradition. While much of that occultism may not be outwardly apparent to those living in the United States, occult paganism and mysticism is quite visible within various other countries.

This same cultist influence has led as well to the insertion of a female principal into many contemporary mainline and evangelical churches as women increasingly supplant men in clerical roles. Those extreme doctrines carry along with them their own consequences: true repentance cannot come, and embedded error breeds still more error.

Those who are caught up in this spiritual whirlpool soon finds himself or herself within a downward spiral to oblivion.

Prophetic Aspect of the Church of Thyatira

Prophetically, the church of Thyatira can be seen to represent the dominance of Romanism at its peak during the period of AD 590 to 1500.[171] During this period, militant Romanism had become firmly established. Simple non-embellished Christianity was overwhelmed by the infiltration of various pagan practices and cultist philosophies, such as the veneration of Mary as a divine intercessor between man and Christ; the veneration of hyper saints and of the Pope; the clerical priesthood; the use of statuary in worship; the use of a talisman for protection; and the occult mysticism involved in the blasphemous repetitious "sacrifice" of the Lord in the Eucharist, etc. – all of which still remains in the contemporary Roman Catholic Church.

This nearly one-thousand-year era is referred to by the Romanist as the "golden age of the church," but historians commonly refer to the same period as the "dark ages" because of its intellectual depravity.[172] This dark period began after the chaotic fall of the political Roman Empire, which had been characterized by hoards of Germanic tribes sweeping through Europe and North Africa – pillaging and often destroying entire towns and villages.

This was also a very dark period for the Gospel of grace, as the Roman church still reigned supreme in awful splendor – placing worship of its own corrupt traditions and ordinances above the simple profound Gospel message of salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Nevertheless, this same era also represented the beginning of a turning point for Christianity as the Word of God was slowly being made

[171]cf. Illustration 1: Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Churches, page 131.

[172]It is interesting to note that nature added to that darkness. A darkness brought about by low sunspot activity covered a period from the mid sixteenth century well into the early seventeenth century. The darkness of this period resulted in extreme cold as well. Therefore, this period is also often referred to as the "little ice age."

available to the populous through early versions of the printing press. Out of that darkness of the spiritually dead Roman church came forth a faithful remnant who embraced the Truth that had so long been neglected and ignored; they rejected unfruitful dead works and sought sound biblical reform. Among those faithful men were Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Huldreich Zwingli, Desiderius Erasmus, and still others whom God had chosen to prepare Europe and the western world for the difficult painful task that lay ahead.[173] ○

[173]The diligent efforts of those chosen reformers are discussed in *CRC* Book III, Chapters 18.1 and 18.2 wherein we discuss the *Protestant Reformation Movement* at some length.

Revelation Chapter 3

In this chapter, we move geographically eastward and inland from Pergamos as we discuss Jesus' messages to the remaining three of the seven churches that had existed in Asia Minor near the end of the first century AD. Those last three churches were located within the cities of Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.[174]

Jesus' Message to the Church of Sardis

We shall first exposit the message that Jesus gave to the messenger of the church that was located at Sardis, a city that was located about thirty miles south of Thyatira and sixty miles northeast of Smyrna.[175]

> **"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;"** (Re.3:1a).

The Lord Jesus identifies himself to the messenger of the church at Sardis as He that has the seven spirits[176] that are ever before the throne of God (cf. Re.1:4), and the seven stars (i.e. elect messengers) which He holds in his right hand (cf. Re.1:16,20). If the church of Sardis is to remain alive, it is only because He maintains the Holy Spirit within their midst who guides it in the Truth through its elect messenger. Even so, this church is in great danger of becoming a dead church.

> **"[1b]I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. [2]Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God"** (Re.3:1b–2).

Although this church purports to be a robust Christian church that is full of life, they are spiritually dead – as are the bodies of those who lie

[174]cf. Map Illustration 6, on page 434.

[175]cf. map on page 434 and description of The Ancient City of Sardis, on page 443.

[176]The "seven Spirits" represent the Holy Spirit in all his perfection and completeness.

in their great cemetery under huge mounds of earth.[177] As to the few works of true faith that remain, Jesus warns them to watch over and strengthen them for they also are about to die as well. Jesus warns that He may need to remove the Holy Spirit that gives them spiritual life, for He has not found this church's works to be fruitful and perfect before God.

> **"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee"** (Re.3:3).

This church had first neglected and then utterly forgotten the sound doctrines that they had once received; but now they are admonished by Christ to wake up and remember them anew. If they do not awake from their slumber, repent, and carefully watch over them, Jesus will come upon them suddenly in an unguarded hour, as does a thief in the night, to take everything of spiritual integrity that they have remaining away from them, thus leaving them destitute of faith and without hope.

> **"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy."** (Re.3:4)

Even here in this dying church, we find that a small remnant of the Elect still existed in their midst. Even in the coldest and most dead of all churches a spark of light still remained; for God has never left any church without a witness – even if they will not hear. This elect remnant have not defiled their outward testimony (i.e. their garments) with the unclean error that surrounds them. For that reason, they are found worthy to walk with Christ clothed in white – which speaks of their spiritual purity:

> **"5He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my**

[177]cf. cemeteries of Sardis on page 443.

> **Father, and before his angels. [6]He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."** (Re. 3:5,6).

Here again, the Lord Jesus speaks to elect over-comers who yet exist not only within the church of Sardis, but within the whole of the seven churches. Jesus promises to "dress them in white raiment, and He further promises that He will never blot out their names from the book of life.[178] Moreover, He promises that He will confess their name before his Father and before his holy angels in Heaven as being one of his own.

Again, the Lord Jesus invites all that have an open ear, to hear what the Spirit has to say to the seven churches.

Contemporary Aspect of the Church of Sardis

Far worse than the cold orthodoxy of the church of Ephesus, which had lost its divine love, was the sad state of the church of Sardis. It is typical of the many stiffly formal and spiritually cold churches all about us today. Like Sardis of old, each of those churches are a dead church in which a spiritual *rigor mortis* has set in. They have neither genuine orthodoxy nor spiritual fervor born of divine love. This formal rigidity clearly characterizes the *Roman Catholic Church*; but sadly, it is also indicative of many of today's hierarchical Protestant churches as well.

In this peculiar modern-day "Sardis-like" church, the Holy Bible has become but an ancient relic to be consulted only occasionally by ordained clergy, thus purposefully leaving the laity of the church ignorant of the great doctrinal truths contained within it. The laity continue onward in thoughtless formalism; going through rote church rituals and ceremonies with automaton-like consistency. In doing so, they exhibit great religious activity, but without any true spiritual impulse that would give any genuine meaning to it. Lacking any doctrinal guidance from

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[178]This speaks of the permanency of the true believer who has overcome his fallen nature through the blood of Christ. Having being born anew in the Holy Spirit, he finds that his name has been indelibly recorded in the Lamb's book of life (cf. Re.20:12) – even before the creation of the earth. Once it was so recorded, it can never be blotted out, as Jesus assures the elect overcoming believer in this verse.

God's Word, many of the rituals and ceremonies in those churches have become offensive to Christ, and some are actually blasphemous through false representations of Him.

This "type" of the church of Sardis has become but a pseudo-religious organization without any foundation for its existence. Few if any of its lay members recall or ever knew the divine Truth that should have bound them together as one in Christ. Any such believer in their midst would be looked down upon by this church as strange and out of step with reality. For that reason, they must either be made to conform through coercion or by the ultimate threat of excommunication.

When the hour comes that this spiritually dead church is visited by Christ, they will certainly not be ready to receive Him. Their leadership will only perceive Him in passing as a ghostly thief in the night, who had come to steal their self-decreed authority only to escape again with any faith that had remained into the darkness of their rejection.

Prophetic Aspect of the Church of Sardis

Prophetically, the church of Sardis can be seen to represent the Roman Church from the year 1500 to near the year AD 2000.[179] This church had pridefully made a name for itself, laying claim to being the true and living church even while it was inwardly dying.

Nevertheless, the Elect within this church had sparked a transition from death to life within those who ultimately abandoned the spiritually dead Roman church. Those were the over-comers who had been called upon by God to come out and separate themselves from its deadly theological errors to walk with Him in the purity of truth (cf. Re.3:4).

The Protestant Reformation Movement

This transitional movement from death to life marks the era of the *Protestant Reformation Movement*,[180] which reached its apogee in Germany around the year 1500 through the diligent efforts of Martin Luther

[179]cf. Illustration 1: Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Churches, page 131.

[180] cf. *CRC* Book III, Chapters 18.1 and 18.2.

with aid provided by his political supporters. During that same time, biblical reform was also well under way in Switzerland through men such as Huldreich Zwingli and Conrad Gebel.[181]

Although the deadly yoke of Romanism was slowly being thrown off of the faithful throughout Europe, its greater secular populace consistently viewed this reform effort as a mere political movement. The growing *Renaissance Movement* of that day continued onward in great force both to aid and conversely to confound true biblical reform.[182] Consequently, as the intellectual darkness abated, many professing Christians became quite willing to toss out sound biblical Truth along with the many superstitious errors of Roman churchianity.

Confusion prevailed within the reform movement regarding what actually constituted true biblical reform. Therefore, it soon became imperative to formally define Biblical Reformed Theology. In 1537 John Calvin undertook the task of formally organizing the reform movement through the publication of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.[183]

Although this document established the intellectual basis of the biblical reform movement, state churches were being formed in emerging nation-states that still held to many of the same traditional trappings and even much of the rank paganism that still existed within the corrupt Roman church. Elements of their worship services, which deviated greatly from the doctrines of true biblical theology, also continued on within those pseudo-reformed churches without critical review and without their much-needed elimination.

While, the spark of theological light had been struck during this period among God's people, and the biblical reformation of church doctrine lingers on in the dusty foundational documents of many Protestant churches, they are not being adhered to in practice but are being completely ignored and rejected as being far too ancient and thus have no

[181] cf. *CRC* Book III, page 225 thru 235.

[182] cf. *The Renaissance* Movement, *CRC* Book III, Chapter 18.1, page 219.

[183] cf. *CRC* Book III, page 239.

genuine relevance within today's world. Therefore, most of the denominational Protestant churches that remain today are spiritually dead within their initial formalism, which is now rapidly giving sway to today's highly radical religious liberalism.

Jesus' Message to the Church of Philadelphia

We now turn our attention to Jesus' message given to the church that was located in the city of Philadelphia. Ancient Philadelphia was located on the Cogamis River in western Asia Minor, about 80 miles east of Smyrna.[184]

> **"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;"** (Re.3:7)

The Lord Jesus identifies himself to the messenger of the church of Philadelphia as He who is holy and true (cf. Re.6:10). God alone is Holy, and his Word alone is True. This was an appropriate salutation for this church that highly valued both holiness and truth. They themselves were holy in the sense that they had set themselves aside to distribute the Truth of God's saving grace through Christ to all that would hear it far and wide. Hence, Philadelphia was a genuine missionary church.

Jesus states that He has the key of David. That is, much as did David in the days when he was king of Israel, He has a "master key" to open all doors. Jesus, the greater Son of David, has the power to open and shut any door within his Kingdom when and as He wills. The door that He opens to those who will hear his voice is the Gospel witness that no man can shut. Unfortunately, not all will accept the Gospel, but many will instead choose to spoil and vehemently reject its Truth out of hand. Unless these should repent, God will give them over to their depravity such that the door to the Kingdom will remain closed and locked to

[184]cf. map on page 434 and description of The Ancient City of Philadelphia, on page 444.

them. Once Jesus shuts that door no man can open it unless and until He Himself chooses to open it again at a future time.

> **"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name"** (Re.3:8).

Jesus affirmed to this church of Philadelphia that He was well aware of their faithful evangelistic activities; as a consequence of their works, He had set before them an open door that no man could shut. This "open door" referred to a door of witness giving them the opportunity to send forth the Gospel of Truth to others far beyond their local church membership. Although greatly weakened by persecution, this church still had a "little strength" remaining, which they had diligently used to witness of the Gospel to others. They had firmly kept Christ's Word and had never denied his name; moreover, they had openly declared that they were Christians even during times of tremendous persecution.

> **"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."** (Re.3:9)

Here in verse 9, we find that a great portion of that persecution was coming from those who were professing to be Jews, but were not truly Jews at all. Jesus says that they were actually of the "synagogue of Satan" and thus were lying about being devout Jews. This is quite similar to the language that Jesus used concerning the Jews residing in Smyrna (cf. Re. 2:9). They had denied Christ who is their rightful King and Messiah, and had persecuted those true Jews who had accepted Him.

Once the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed a generation earlier, the unbelieving Jews who had escaped the slaughter had wandered off into meaningless rabbinical argumentation that had led them increasingly farther astray from their true Jewish roots. Here Jesus emphatically states that one day in the future He would make those apostate Jews worship at the feet of his faithful followers, and that they would then

come to realize that He had truly loved them whom they had viciously persecuted.

> **"[10]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. [11]Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown"** (Re.3:10,11).

The church at Philadelphia had patiently guarded the purity of the Gospel in very trying times and had kept all of the words of Truth that the Apostles had delivered. As a reward, they would not need to be severely tested as would many others who had not held solidly to the Truth.[185] Therefore, He tells this faithful church to "hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." What they have is their abiding love and solid trust in Him through faith. This crown refers to the victor's crown that all the faithful will receive in the day of His appearing.

> **"[12]Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God,** *which is* **new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and** *I will write upon him* **my new name. [13]He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."** (Re. 3:12,13)

The "temple" refers to the dwelling place of the Supreme Deity of the Godhead within the New Jerusalem, which will come down from God out of Heaven (cf. Re.21:2).

In this passage, we encounter what at first appears to be a conundrum: How can Jesus, who is God, refer to another as "my God?" Many assume that He is referring to his Father (i.e. Jehovah). However, the

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[185]The "hour of temptation" likely refers to the great trials and tribulations that will come upon the entire earth in the last days. Jesus informs them that in that day He will come very quickly, thus referring to the coming Rapture of his Church.

word for "god" that is used four times here in this passage is *theos* in the Greek, which is not a proper name; rather, it expresses deity as an attribute that encompasses the entire Godhead consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Hence, we must conclude that Jesus uses the possessive pronoun "my" collectively in describing the Supreme Deity of the Godhead within which He Himself subsists.

Jesus says He will make of him who holds fast to the Truth a "pillar in the temple of my God."– not merely a white stone within its walls, but a great pillar standing upright to support the very capstone of its "roof." Jesus will engrave upon the pillar of this man, "my new name" that He alone knows. Engraving this "new name" upon this man's pillar suggests a possessive intimacy and familiarity between him and Jesus Christ. Moreover, Jesus will engrave "New Jerusalem" upon the pillar of this man, thus assuring he who overcomes a secure place within that Eternal City – forever.

Even in their human weakness God had given those of this church sufficient strength so that they had "kept his word, and hast not denied his name." As with the suffering church in Smyrna, Jesus found no fault at all with the church of Philadelphia. Moreover He had opened a door of witness to those who believe and remain faithful in disseminating the Gospel of redemption to reach others with the Truth.

Again the Lord Jesus reiterates, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Prophetic Aspect Becomes Contemporary Reality

As we reach this place in our Commentary, we discover that there will not be one but two dominant churches coexisting within the final years of the church age.[186] The first church bears the likeness of the evangelical church of Philadelphia, while the second bears the likeness of the prideful rich church of Laodicea. It must be noted that we are now living in an age in which the prophetic aspect of both of these churches are currently being realized, such that the contemporary and prophetic

[186] cf. Illustration 1: Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Churches, page 131.

aspects of each of those two first-century churches have essentially become one in conflict with each other.

For that reason, we have chosen to forego any discussion of the contemporary and prophetic aspects of the church of Philadelphia until we have concluded our exposition of Jesus' message to the church of Laodicea. In doing so, the contemporary-prophetic aspects of those two radically opposing churches can be compared side-by-side (cf. page 171).

Jesus' Message to the Church of Laodicea

Having discussed the loyal missionary church that was located in the city of Philadelphia, we must now turn to consider its polar opposite, the church of Laodicea. Laodicea was a city that was situated in the Lycus valley, about 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia and about 100 miles east of Ephesus.[187]

Laodicea is the very last of the seven churches addressed by Jesus in the book of the Revelation, and it does not in any way receive a good report. Those two facts combined affords it special significance, as we shall note later. For now, let us closely examine the harsh message and severe warning that Jesus sent to this highly corrupt and wayward church:

> **"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;"** (Re.3:14)

The Lord Jesus identifies himself to the messenger of the church of Laodicea as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." The Amen means that He has the final Word on all things as the faithful and true witness of God's creation, for "all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (Jn. 1:3).

[187]cf. map on page 434 and description of The Ancient City of Laodicea, on page 445.

This opening statement would seem to imply that this church had a very skewed notion of creation and were denying Jesus' direct involvement in its formation.[188] In this, they were not being faithful nor were they true witnesses of Jesus Christ.

> **"[15]I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. [16]So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth"** (Re.3:15,16).

As with the other churches Jesus knew all about their works, and they were not good. Like tepid lukewarm soup, Jesus said He would "spew them out of his mouth." From this statement we cannot conclude that Jesus would prefer this church to be cold, but the fact that they were barely lukewarm: neither for Him nor against Him. Their understanding of Truth was pliable being subject to every wind of doctrine, and their works reflected that wavering.

This is a miserable situation in which a church should find itself. A true church should find itself on fire for Christ, holding fast to his Word, and diligent in their effort to reach the lost with the Gospel. However, the church of Laodicea did not much care about matters of faith at all, inasmuch as all of their thoughts and efforts were being directed toward amassing great material wealth:

> **"[17]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: [18]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"** (Re.3:17,18).

Because of their desire for amassing great material wealth, the church of Laodicea suffered from spiritual blindness and could not see

[188]Knowing what we know of the parody of this church today, it was effectively embracing an early form of Evolutionism.

their impoverished spiritual state. All of this spiritual blindness existed within a city that claimed to have a salve to cure all ailments of the eye.[189] Jesus admonished them to buy with their gold a "spiritual ointment" for their eyes that they may see their lost condition. Impoverished of spiritual insight, they sought to root it out of all others as well.

They took no stand for Christ, yet they did not particularly care to spoil the pleasure that they had found in their meaningless religious activities. Being rich and satisfied with an abundance of material goods, they saw no need to be concerned about serious spiritual matters.

They were wretched because they were still wallowing in their sins. They were miserable because they lacked hope. They were poor because they had no treasure stored up in Heaven. They were blind because they had no faith with which to see spiritual things. They were naked, because they were not clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Jesus firmly counseled them to exchange their worldly gold for Heavenly gold. They should "buy of Him gold tried in the fire" that they may have true riches, and to buy of him "white raiment" that they not be found spiritually naked and ashamed when He returns.

> **"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent"** (Re.3:19).

They should not think that they were favored of God because of their riches and good health, inasmuch as God regularly chastens and rebukes those that He loves rather than spoil them by indulging them. If they are to receive his favor, they must be zealous of his love and submit to Him in true and active repentance.

> **"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"** (Re.3:20).

Counting their worldly riches as being of more value than having any true love for Christ, they had effectively locked Jesus out of their church. In this verse, Jesus states that He "stands at the church door and knocks," but in their concern in amassing riches they do not even hear

[189] cf. The Ancient City of Laodicea, page 445.

Him; nor would they admit Him into their sanctuary if they did.[190] Nevertheless, Jesus appeals to "any man" within that dark spiritually-empty church who has divinely opened ears to hear his knock, to quietly open the door so that He may enter in to commune with him. This "any man" represents the very small remnant of the Elect who remains within this dead church, as the lone witness to the Truth.

> **"[21]To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. [22]He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"** (Re. 3:21,22).

Jesus had absolutely nothing good to say about this church, only scathing words of condemnation. Even so, there was a very small remnant who would overcome and commune with Him as they through the agency of the Holy Spirit would hear his voice. Those few who do so will be invited to join Christ as He sits down with his Father on his throne.[191]

The Lord Jesus then implores mankind for the seventh and very last time saying, "**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches**."

The Two Opposing Churches of the Last Days

Having completed the exposition of the text of Jesus' messages to both the church of Philadelphia and the church of Laodicea, we shall

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[190]An application of this verse is commonly used as an evangelistic tool to say that Christ is knocking at the door of a sinful unbeliever's heart to allow Him into their lives. In doing so, the true context of this verse, in which Christ is admonishing a wayward corrupt church for their rejection of Him, is lost. The fact is, God does not request our permission to admit Him into our hearts and lives; rather, the Holy Spirit breaks through our fleshly sinful barrier of unbelief by a sovereign act of God's will. In doing so, the sinner receives from God that which he does not merit – even as he becomes an adopted son of God within the brotherhood of Christ.

[191]Jesus is undoubtedly speaking of the majestic throne that is located within the New Jerusalem of the eternal ages.

now proceed to discuss both the contemporary and the prophetic aspects of these last two churches. As we previously noted, we are now living in an age in which the prophetic types of the loyal evangelical church of Philadelphia and the rich liberal church of Laodicea are currently coexisting as two opposing dominant churches.[192] For that reason, we have chosen to compare both their contemporary and prophetic aspects together here.

Contemporary-Prophetic Aspect of the Church of Philadelphia

The church at Philadelphia, about which Jesus had only cordial and encouraging words of commendation, is indicative, as to type, of today's biblical-reformed evangelical church that will one day be caught up to meet with Him in the air as He calls down for his own to join Him.[193] Jesus' message to this loyal evangelical church indicates the necessity for it to hold fast to the faith without wavering (cf. He.10:23; Jude v. 3), to hear and keep his Word foremost in mind, (cf. Lu.11:28), and to never deny his Name in the face of strong opposition – even while experiencing extreme persecution (cf. Mk.13:13).

The modern evangelical movement had its beginnings in the 1730s and 1740s within the first "Great Awakening,"[194] which involved the combined preaching of John Wesley, and still others in Europe, but especially so in the early American colonies through the preaching of George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards. America had become the incubator in which the Word of God took root and then grew to reach maturity in the formation of what was essentially a Christian nation. Having firmly embraced the faith and having heeded God's Word regarding the Gospel, American churches soon became engaged in ardu-

[192]cf. Prophetic Aspect Becomes Contemporary Reality, Page 167 and Illustration 1: Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Churches, page 131.

[193] cf. 1Th.4:13-18.

[194]cf. *Comprehensively Reformed Christianity* Book III, page 291.

ous missionary efforts of their own to reach the lost souls of millions around the world through an "open door" of Gospel opportunity (cf. Re. 3:8).

Those early evangelical churches exemplify many of today's biblical-reformed evangelical churches that still take full advantage of Jesus' "open door" to get the Gospel of peace out to a lost and decaying world as their major priority. Their one great desire was and is that every man, woman and child will have the opportunity to clearly hear the Gospel and to either embrace Jesus Christ as one of his Elect – or reject Him out of a reprobate mind to their own peril. Today that opportunity has been greatly expanded through modern means of transportation and printed materials as well as through various advanced forms of electronic and digital media.[195]

Today's evangelical churches fully realize the power of embracing the Lord Jesus alone for personal salvation totally apart from the ritualistic doctrinal errors established within the institutional church of Rome – which unfortunately has continued on unabated within many major Protestant denominations. The biblical-reformed evangelical church fully rejects the tyranny of the Roman church's efforts to keep the Word of God out of the hands of the laity. They seek to get the Bible translated into the heart language of every person in every nation on earth, and having done so to place it into their hands,[196] such that through the working of the Holy Spirit applying God's Word to their minds and hearts, they may be set free by the Truth of the Word and embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Contemporary-Prophetic Aspect of the Church of Laodicea

In complete contrast to today's faithful biblical-reformed evangelical churches, we observe many popular, self-satisfied, worldly churches around us that can be quite accurately compared to the ancient church of

[195]cf. *CRC* Book III, page 393.

[196]cf. *CRC* Book III, page 388.

Laodicea – about which Jesus only had words of condemnation. While the *Roman Catholic Church* obviously fits this description, it has through its teaching and example infiltrated nearly all of Christendom – including modern-day Protestantism. Thus, a contemporary self-deluded Protestant church, which once had its beginnings within the *Protestant Reformation movement*, has to its detriment abandoned sound biblical reform to retain and practice many of the dogmas and false traditions of the Roman Church.

This worldly Protestant "high-church" came into full maturation in America during the modernist movement of the twentieth century.[197] Within that century, and increasingly more as the decades continued to roll by, it has grown into the looming likeness of that rich apostate Laodicean church of the first century. Would that this church could recognize its own reflection in the verses of this final message to the churches of the Revelation and repent; but like the Laodicean church of old it is far more interested in social issues, in political activism, in swelling its ranks, amassing great wealth, and in pursuing the pleasures of this world. These churches have bought into the modern Prosperity Doctrine in which it is assumed that all true believers will become rich in goods and fame, as well as the Perpetual Health doctrine in which it is believed that all true believers can avoid experiencing any serious illnesses through an abundance of "faith."

This apostate Protestant church no longer considers Holy Scripture to be authoritative, but chooses instead to accept flowery speeches obtained from an abundance of secular literature from its pulpits. Those utterances are but emotional psychobabble having no eternal purpose or value. In an attempt to mimic popular evangelical churches, worship in those churches has become overwhelmed with the loud decadent music of the age, which has already infected many apostate evangelical churches, as their pew Bibles collect dust and soon disappear.

Collectively, those churches have become the place for the unsaved to go to be entertained. Not surprisingly, lobbies of some of those churches are filled with fast-food venues to fill their participants stom-

[197] cf. *CRC* Book III, Page 331.

achs even as their souls starve for the bread of life. Like the Laodicean church of old, they remain hungry because they have no spiritual food to satisfy their emptiness. They are wretched because they are still wallowing in their sins. They are miserable because they lack genuine hope based upon divine promise. They are poor because they have no spiritual treasure stored up in Heaven. They are blind because they have no faith with which to see spiritual things. They are naked, because they are not clothed in the white righteousness of Christ. They continue to live in wanton pleasure and fatten their hearts with trivia and their stomachs with junk food much as do cattle in a feeder lot until the day of their slaughter finally comes upon them (cf. Ja. 5:5).

In the latter days of this current church era, this mockery of the true Church will altogether deny the faith as it was delivered by the Apostles, and in total apostasy it will readily merge back into the corrupt Roman church from which it came. Together as one, they will aid the political Antichrist in persecuting the remnant of the true Church yet remaining upon the earth. After the Lord Jesus calls down out of Heaven for his Bride to come up to meet with Him in the heavens above the earth, this parody of the Laodicean Church will be left behind. There it will continue in awful decadent splendor – until one day the angry jealous kings of the Antichrist will obliterate it (cf. Re.17:5-16). ○

Revelation Chapter 4

As we have concluded our study of Revelation Chapter 3, it is significant to note that the Church is never specifically mentioned by that name within the text of the Revelation that follows. Only after the future-prophetic section, which begins in Chapter 6, is concluded, does the Lord Jesus again relate Himself to the churches in a first-century present-tense to the Apostle John (cf. Re.22:16).

For that reason, many Christians of the Dispensationalist persuasion[198] envision a brief period of time bridging an unrecorded gap from the end of Revelation Chapter 3 to the beginning of Chapter 4. During that unrecorded period, the true Church, represented by the Church of Philadelphia, is believed to have been Raptured; while leaving an apostate church, represented by the church of Laodicea, upon the earth as Chapter 4 begins. Thus, Revelation Chapters 4 and 5 are incorrectly considered to be future-prophetic.

While that chronology is certainly correct as to a future-prophetic type of those ancient seven churches existing as latter-day churches within a future age, as we have previously set forth, we must note that the text of Chapter 3 verses 7 to 13 does not state, nor does it imply, that the Rapture of the Church of Philadelphia has actually taken place, nor does it even convey that it is immediately pending.

Nevertheless, Philadelphia was and is indicative, as to type, of a faithful evangelical Church of the last days, that Christ will one day call up off the earth to abide with Him in his Heavenly realm. Revelation Chapter 5 likewise does not speak of "things which shall be hereafter," but as we have previously set forth on page 126, it speaks of "things that are" within this current Church age on earth – albeit those things that are in Heaven, not those things that are upon the earth.

As Chapter 4 begins, the Revelation takes on a very distinct Jewish quality in which Jesus Christ is not viewed as the Lord over his Church,

[198]cf. Addendum: Dispensationalism, page 460.

but as the Jewish Messiah – the "root and offspring of David."[199] This strong emphasis on Jewish symbolism would tend to lend some credence to the Dispensational premise that the Church has already been Raptured as Chapter 4 begins. However, there are two passages recorded much later within the future-prophetic text of the Revelation that strongly allude to the Church – although it is not specifically mentioned by that name. The first of those two passages describes the sudden appearance of a great multitude in Heaven out of every Gentile nation, kindred, and tongue (cf. Re.7:9), which is highly indicative of the Rapture described by the Apostle Paul in 1Th. 4:15-17. The second passage describes the marriage supper of the Lamb to his beloved Bride, the Church, (cf. Re.19:6-9), which through that mystic union becomes his "wife" (cf. Re.19:7) who shall thereafter adorn a New Jerusalem throughout the Eternal Ages (cf. Re.21:9,10).

As we advance into the depths of the prophetic section beginning in Chapter 6, and especially so following Chapter 7, we shall find that many allusions are made to Old Testament prophecies, practices, places, things and events, which are more readily understood by the Jewish mind than that of a Gentile Christian. In that respect, this prophetic portion of the prophecy is directed toward the Jew; most probably to a sealed Jewish remnant (cf. Re. 7:1-8) living in the last days. This prophecy will enable them to understand the many trials and difficulties they must endure and overcome as the Kingdom Age rapidly approaches.

Although the Revelation is specifically intended to assure the Jew concerning a future Kingdom Age to come, the text is also intended for the edification of Christian believers in this age, such that they may understand the present and future activities of the Lord Jesus Christ – even as they await his return for them near the culmination of this current age.

With those preliminary matters out of the way, let us now move on to determine what the inspired text of Revelation Chapters 4 and 5 informs us about this present period in Heaven; and as much as possible,

[199]cf. Jewish Context of the Revelation, page 95.

interpret its meaning in its direct literal context without becoming overly embroiled in systemic bias and controversy:

John Travels through an Open Door in 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 shew thee things which must be hereafter"** (Re. 4:1**).**

John had earlier stated that he was "in the spirit on the Lord's day" (cf. Re.1:9,10). However, before we reached this place in the Revelation, the Apostle John had remained firmly anchored, both body and spirit, on the Island of Patmos, where he had seen many things concerning the glorified Christ judging and ruling over his earthbound temporal church.

Everything John had seen thus far had been viewed from an earthly perspective. However, that perspective is about to change as Chapter 4 begins with the appearance of a "door" opening into Heaven. The English word "door" is *thura* in the Greek, which is properly defined as an open entrance or portal, not a hinged door as we know it. Heaven is *ouranos* in the Greek which means that this entrance was located in the sky above John, and that it extended upward to the very abode of God.

The voice that John heard was as an extremely loud trumpet, which echoed and reverberated within him; and it forcefully beckoned him to ascend through the portal in order to be shown "things which must be hereafter."[200]

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[200]While the ultimate purpose of John's spiritual journey to Heaven was to show him things that "shall be hereafter," it is evident that the things John observed in Revelation Chapters 4 and 5 are not future things. Today, even as in John's day, God is seated upon his majestic throne and Christ has ascended into Heaven wherein He has already received the title deed to the earth and is currently being worshiped by angels. It is only when we reach Revelation Chapter 6 that future things "that shall be hereafter" will actually begin to be revealed to John, as Christ begins to open the seals of the seven-sealed scroll to gain full authority and mastery over the earth as its Lord and king (cf. Re.1:19; Addendum Article: Three Major Divisions of the Revelation, page 426).

God's Throne in Heaven

"[2]And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne. [3]And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald" (Re.4:2,3)

A complete change in visual perspective from an earthly to a Heavenly one takes place, as John experienced an instantaneous conveyance into the vast realms of Heaven. His journey was unquestionably a spiritual one, as John makes clear with the words, "and immediately I was in the spirit." Although John's body remained upon the earth, all of his mental faculties were as if he had been physically relocated into Heaven itself.[201]

This is what is commonly referred to as a vision, through which real persons, things, and events are supernaturally impressed upon the human mind through the express agency of God by the Holy Spirit. Although visions can be imparted to men as they sleep (cf. Ge. 46:2; Job 4:13; Da.7:7,13), visions differ from ordinary dreams in which the sleeping mind fabricates its own images and nonsensical happenings, which most often evaporate upon or soon after awaking.

Although John had been suddenly transferred in the spirit into Heaven to view and record things that must occur thereafter, he first needed to become oriented to his Heavenly surroundings. Therefore, throughout Chapter 4, we find that John is still recording "things that are," albeit about those things that are currently in Heaven, not about those things that are upon the earth.

The first thing that John saw and recorded was the existence of a majestic throne, which is obviously not a future occurrence, for this

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[201] Jesus' trumpet-shout down out of Heaven for his Church (cf. 1Th.4:16,17) is seen to correlate reasonably well with the text of Revelation 4:1 in which a loud voice from Heaven commanded John to "come up hither." Hence, John's spiritual transport is incorrectly viewed by some Dispensationalists as being symbolic of the Rapture of the entire Church near the very beginning of Chapter 4.

throne is eternal and it currently exists and is occupied today. The fact that this throne was set in Heaven indicates that the Divine Sovereign Ruler of Heaven must sit upon it. Although, John could discern "One who sat on the throne," he apparently could not recognize any physical form – only an intense radiation of brilliant colors of light.[202] The here-mentioned Jasper stone is multicolored with purple predominating, while the sardine stone is a fiery red.[203] The rainbow, or "halo," surrounding the throne also radiated sparkling shades of emerald green, signifying life.

Although God subsists in three persons, such that this Glory could be seen to represent the entire Godhead, John's vision of "One who sat on the throne" understood in context as being singular, specifically identifies God the Father who eternally reigns upon this majestic throne in Heaven.

Twenty-four Elders Seated before the Throne

> **"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"** (Re.4:4).

Later on in the Revelation, we shall find that angels frequently approach John to explain the meaning of things that he sees, but no such intervention is found here. Apparently, John has no question in his mind concerning what he is seeing. Nevertheless, there is considerable speculation and controversy among Bible commentators regarding who or even what those twenty-four elders are – or represent.

Some believe that these elders are supernatural creatures much like, or even in fact, angels. This conjecture comes about from the fact that angels are commonly seen as being dressed in white raiment, as are these elders. However, angels are never referred to as elders anywhere

[202]God is a spirit (cf. Jn.4:24) who has no physical form, yet He unveils his Glory through visible light.

[203]Its name is apparently derived from the city of Sardis in which it was commonly found.

else in Scripture, nor do angels wear crowns of gold, making it highly unlikely that this could be a sole exception.

The primary meaning of the word "elder" (Greek, *presbuteros*) is a man[204] who has attained dignity, wisdom, and position as a consequence of vast knowledge and experience gained through advanced age. Therefore, John's use of the word "elder" here strongly implies that he recognized them as being elderly men, perhaps even ancient men of old.

The white raiment worn by these elders indicates their state of purity and righteousness, as would be expected by their honored placement in seats before God's throne. The crowns they are wearing are not *diadems*, as are worn by a sovereign ruler, but are *stephanos* in the Greek, which signifies a victor's crown that was commonly won by runners of a long and arduous foot race. Those crowns were ordinarily a garland made of leaves that must wither with time, but the crowns that the twenty-four elders wear are made of gold, thus signifying the permanence of their victory as those who had persevered in a marathon of life under very trying circumstances for a very long period of time. Other than that, no specific evidence of their identity or origin is offered here in this text.[205]

It is commonly postulated by Dispensationalists[206] that these twenty-four elders represent the entire Church, which had been "caught up" (Greek: *harpazo*; cf. 1Th.4:17) into Heaven just prior to or coincident with the text beginning in Revelation 4:1. Obviously, the consummated Church will be composed of a massive throng of people, not just twenty-

[204]We must note that "man" as it used here regarding Elders (*presbuteros*) is not generic, but specifically dictates a biological male as opposed to a biological female. Moreover, all of the current confusion regarding the supposed existence of a fluid "gender" that is separate and is most-often opposed to biological sex, is but a modern invention of a fallen mind that directly opposes God and denies his stated act of human creation (cf. Ge.1:27). As such, those who promote this modern fabrication have no ability to contribute anything useful to any discussion regarding Elders within the context of this ancient document.

[205] We shall explore the possible identities of these twenty-four elders in some detail on page 472 of an Addendum Article wherein we discuss the Dispensational doctrine of Pretribulationalism.

[206]cf. Addendum Article: Dispensationalism, on page 460.

four individuals. However, Dispensationalists conjecture that the entire Church is represented here by this council of twenty-four elders.

> **"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"** (Re; 4:5).

The "lightnings and thunderings" emanating from the throne are reminiscent of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai (cf. Ex.19:16, 20:18). The "voices" can be understood to represent the internal council of God, from which He speaks his pronouncements, and through which He also spoke the Ten Commandments of the Law to Moses. The seven lamps of fire who are the seven Spirits of God is actually the Holy Spirit who enlightens the minds of men. The number seven signifies that He is completely God, as is also the Father and the Son who subsist as one indivisible being within the triune Godhead.

Four Living Creatures in the Midst of the Throne

> **"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"** (Re.4:6).

The crystal clear sea which John described as "glass like unto crystal" before and around the throne represents a broad extent of separation from everything else that is around the throne in keeping with the irreproachable purity and Holiness of God.

The four "beasts" (Greek: *zoa*) are eternal living creatures[207] having many eyes with which they view the past, present, and future as one. They are always alert and highly aware of their surroundings as with righteous zeal they guard the majestic throne against any that may approach it uninvited – lest they immediately perish.

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[207]"*Zoon,*" is the singular form of "*zoa"* from which we get our English word "zoo," which differentiates these four beasts from fanatical unrestrained beasts (Greek: *therion*), which we shall encounter later on in the book of Revelation as representing evil men and other evil beings.

> **"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"** (Re.4:7).

Some have speculated from this description that these four Heavenly creatures can be seen to represent the earthly creatures that God had created and had later saved in the ark at the time of the great flood. Each represents the head of its general "kind;" the lion represents wild animals, the calf (or ox) represents domestic animals, the creature with a face of a man represents Noah and his family, and the eagle represents birds and other flying creatures.[208] By extension of this imagery, those four creatures can also be seen as representing God's voracious power, tremendous strength, infinite mercy, and swift decisiveness in all of his activities.

The four faces of the living creatures can also be seen as representing the four Gospels. As the lion is viewed as the king of the animal kingdom, the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as the eternal King of mankind. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is seen as the servant of mankind as is represented by the calf (or ox), a beast of burden who patiently transports and carries on its back man's tremendous load. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is presented as the perfect man who is sinless and undefiled. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is presented as absolute deity, the infinite eternal God represented here as a soaring eagle.

All of that speculation aside, the creatures are further described in the text as follows:

> **"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"** (Re.4:8).

It is reasonably evident that these four living creatures are creatures of the same general "kind," also having six wings, that the Old-Testa-

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[208] Of noted absence are fish and other sea creatures, which would have remained in their natural element of water outside of the ark.

ment prophet, Isaiah, saw, which were referred to as "seraphims" (Hebrew = "burning or fiery ones"):[209]

> ***"[1]In the year that king Uzziah[210] died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. [2]Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. [3]And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy,*** *is* ***the LORD of hosts: the whole earth*** *is* ***full of his glory. [4]And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke"*** (Is.6:1-4).

Their general appearance as described by Isaiah would have been seen as consisting of fiery bronze or copper. These four living creatures literally burn with their love and devotion to God. Isaiah saw the four seraphims standing above God's throne, while John saw them "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne."

Each of the four living creatures had six wings with which they moved about or could steadily hover in place. Concerning the wings of each creature, Isaiah tells us that "with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." Their many eyes, which John saw within them, indicates their constant personal introspection to assure that they never fail in their divine purpose to serve and glorify God.

The Seraphim do not ever rest or sleep, but stay awake and alert in order that they may continuously praise God's holiness, which they do by continuously declaring, "Holy, Holy, Holy." These three "holies" ex-

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[209]A somewhat similar "kind" of living creatures were seen at the entrance to Eden protecting the way to the tree of life after Adam's fall (cf. Ge. 3:24). We note however that those creatures were referred to as Cherubim, which distinguishes them from the Seraphim that Isaiah saw in his vision.

[210] Uzziah was a good king who had faithfully ruled the southern kingdom of Judah for 52 years. His loss was deeply felt by Isaiah, thus causing him to seek solace within the Temple.

claimed by the Seraphim must be understood to represent the holy unity of the Triune Godhead, which eternally subsists as the Father in Heaven; the God-man, Jesus Christ, who died on earth for man's sin and rose again for their justification; and the Holy Spirit who infilled Jesus while on earth and who presently remains on earth to convict men of their sin and to indwell and guide the redeemed. With their many eyes behind, within, and before, the Seraphim see and declare the holiness of God who forever was, the holiness of God who is, and the eternal holiness of God who will subsist forever in the future.

The prophet Ezekiel also saw four living creatures having a somewhat similar appearance, yet apparently of a slightly different "kind," which he recorded in some detail in his prophecy, as each having the general appearance (form or likeness) of a man:

> ***"[5]Also out of the midst thereof*** *came* ***the likeness of four living creatures. And this*** *was* ***their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. [6]And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. [7]And their feet*** *were* ***straight feet; and the sole of their feet*** *was* ***like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. [8]And*** *they had* ***the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. [9]Their wings*** *were* ***joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward*** (Ez.1:5-9)**.**

It would appear that while all of God's intelligent creatures have the general likeness of men in their overall form and shape, they can differ considerably by kind in their specific attributes and appearances.

Praise Offered to God the Creator

Returning to the text of the Revelation we read,

> **"[9]And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, [10]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, [11]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"** (Re.4:9-11).

When the four living creatures of Re.4:8 give "glory and honor and thanks" to the eternal God who sits upon the throne for who He is, the twenty-four elders fall upon their faces and cast their crowns before Him for what He has done. For, they live and exist only at his pleasure in accordance with his divine will. Therefore, the words that the twenty-four elders speak is essentially a creation hymn: "For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." They echo the praise of the four living creatures within their own anthem saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power."

Like all that God has created, men were not created for themselves, that they may glorify their own being, but were created solely for God's divine purpose in doing so. Therefore, we mortals all exist only to glorify God. As sinful fallen creatures, the only way we can do so is through a divine relationship with God's beloved Son, who was sent to earth to become the perfect man, who alone could and would restore man to his initial holy status and calling by suffering an atoning death for them on the cross of Calvary.[211] ○

[211]i.e. *Golgotha* in Hebrew: a knoll near Jerusalem that resembled a human skull or cranium. (cf. Jn,19:17; Lu.23:33).

Revelation Chapter 5

The Scroll with Seven Seals

"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" (Re. 5:1).

The "right hand" of "him that sat upon the throne" must be viewed as an anthropomorphic expression that John used to facilitate our understanding, inasmuch as he had previously indicated that the One whom he saw on the throne had no recognizable physical form. The One who sits on the throne is undoubtedly God the Father who is a pure spirit (cf. Jn. 4:24).

The "book," as it is translated here in the *AKJV* text, is *biblion* in the Greek. It has been more properly translated "scroll" in later English translations, inasmuch as a book having a codex volume of pages, first appeared in the early second century AD and would therefore have been unknown to John who wrote this document at the end of the first century.

Be that as it may, the contents of this sealed document is what is all important, not its precise construction. This "scroll" was written on the inside, such that the text was not visible without first opening the roll; this was forestalled by seven seals affixed to the outside. A sealed scroll was never to be opened by anyone other than its intended recipient, whose name was clearly written near the seals on the outside.

Some commentators have referred to this document as the "title deed" to the earth, but much more than real estate is implied; indeed as we shall discover, every living thing including man is encompassed by the absolute authority that is found within this sealed document. As we read in Daniel 7:14, He who possesses this scroll is given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."

> **"[2]And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? [3]And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon"** (Re. 5:2,3).

Adam had been initially instructed by God to exercise complete dominion and absolute authority over the earth and all that is within it (cf. Ge. 1:26,28), but his disastrous fall into sin rendered that directive impossible for him to achieve. Moreover, as a consequence of the extent of the fall, no man in Adam's long line of descendants has possessed the perfect righteous wisdom necessary to rule over the earth. As a consequence of man's imperfection, God has forcibly withheld that authority from them, while keeping it in trust for one perfect Man to one day claim it.

The phrase "under the earth" refers to the many men who have aspired to exercise this authority, but having failed are now dead and buried. Although many men such as Alexander the Great have made the attempt to seize it by force (cf. Mt.11:12), all have failed in the end as a consequence of the insidious prevailing sin in their lives. Only a perfect sinless man having a never-ending life span could achieve that goal, and Adam's natural line could never produce such a man.

> **"And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon** (Re. 5:4).

John was greatly disturbed by the strong angel's words and the realization that no man was found worthy to open this scroll. Even the name of the recipient written on its outside was forbidden to look upon. No man dare consider breaking the seals to open it and read its contents lest it incur God's wrath, which punishment would be swiftly executed. Nevertheless without someone worthy to open the scroll, the earth and all upon it must forever exist in a state of complete futility and sorrow without any hope of deliverance. This thought caused John to weep profusely.

> **"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"** (Re. 5:5).

One of the twenty-four elders, whom we first saw in Chapter 4, approached John and told him that he need not despair, because there is one man who has prevailed and is worthy to open the scroll by loosing its seals thereof. When he speaks to John about this worthy man, he speaks using Old-Covenant terminology: the "Lion of the tribe of Juda, and the Root of David" specifically identifies the man of whom the elder speaks as the Jewish Messiah (i.e. the Christ).

> **"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"** (Re. 5:6).

Likely expecting to see the glorified Christ, as He had appeared to him in the earlier vision of Chapter 1, John sees instead a lamb as it had been slain standing in the very midst of this magnificent Heavenly gathering before the throne of God. We realize that a dead lamb could not stand; therefore, the standing lamb "as it had been slain" indicates not only its sacrificial death, but also its resurrection from the dead. This Lamb is therefore the Christ, the Son of Man, who has been carried forth in the glory clouds of Heaven (cf. Ac. 1:9) to stand before the Ancient of Days, as was spoken of by Daniel the prophet (cf. Da.7:13).

The seven horns of the Lamb indicate his complete and absolute power, while its seven eyes correlates with the seven flames of fire that ever burn before God's throne (cf. Re.4:5), which "are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth," that is the Holy Spirit in all his omniscience, through which the Lamb had been chosen to rectify the fallen condition of mankind.

We must realize that we are viewing this scene from a Jewish perspective. This is indeed Jesus, the Lamb of God, who humbly submitted

Himself to a shameful death upon a Roman cross and in doing so carried away in his body the sins of the world to be buried with Him (cf. Jn.1:29). When He arose again in great power, our sins remained buried in the grave forever, as we, the redeemed, arose within Him to newness of life. Jesus died once for our sins, but now He gloriously lives on forevermore in the very presence of his Father where He makes continual intercession for us.

Jesus Receives the Scroll from his Father

> **"And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne"**(Re. 5:7).

Through this one momentous act, God the Father has granted to his Son full authority over the earth, as it is specifically detailed within this scroll; the slain Lamb now becomes in effect the glorified Christ, whom John saw in Revelation 1 verses 13 thru 18. As He takes this scroll, Jesus Christ receives his just inheritance of the earth and all that is contained within and upon it.

> **"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"** (Re. 5:8).

At this point in John's narrative the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders redirect their praise toward the Lamb, who had taken the scroll. They fall down before Him, as they had earlier before the Father on his throne. In doing so, they recognize Jesus' deity as being one with the Father in the Godhead. Every one of the elders has a harp[212] in their possession, with which they sing praises to God. The golden

[212] The "harp" (Greek = *kith-ar'-ah*) is of unknown affinity commonly referring to a lyre, a multi-stringed musical instrument consisting of strings stretched tightly over a rigid yoke. Nevertheless, every man has a larynx as a part of his created anatomy consisting of two strings, with which he can speak and make a wide range of melodic sounds in like manner as a "harp." Which is being referred to here in the Revelation is subject to interpretation.

bowls[213] contain incense, which is the essence of the prayers of many saints who had long prayed and looked forward to this wondrous day.

A New Song Praising Christ

> **"[9]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; [10]and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth"** (Re. 5:9,10).

This "new song" that the four beasts and the twenty-four elders chant is a canticle of praise directed to the Lamb of God for his divine work of redemption. Whereas they had previously chanted a creation hymn of God's glory, so evident in his astounding creative activity (cf. Re.4:9-10), that praise is greatly multiplied in God's even greater work of redemption made possible through his Son. It has all come about through the blood of the slain Lamb, Jesus Christ, who alone through perfect obedience and intense human suffering has now been found worthy to take the scroll from the right hand of God, his Father.

In this passage, as it is recorded here in the *AKJV* text, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders appear to be speaking of their own redemption that was wrought about through the blood of the Lamb; whereas in many other reliable Greek translations they are actually praising God for the redemption of mortal men apart from themselves.

Obviously, the four living creatures joining in this canticle were holy sinless beings that had never been in need of redemption, such that they could not have joined in this "new song" as it is presented here in the AKJV. However, a similar exclusion, could also imply that the twenty-four elders were uniquely without sin – totally apart from having received redemption through the blood of the Lamb. That would be highly problematic, assuming that the Twenty-four Elders were actually de-

[213]The "vials," so described in the *Authorized Version*, are better understood as "bowls."

scendants of Adam who had plunged the entire human race into the depths of sin.

This issue is far too important and involved to attempt to untangle it here within this Commentary section – especially so since it calls into question the accuracy of the *AKJV* translation and even the underlying Greek *Textus Receptus* itself as to its alteration of certain specific pronouns. Inasmuch as the pronouns utilized in later translations also call into question the identity of the twenty-four elders as being redeemed members of the Church, it also calls into question the veracity of the dispensational doctrine of Pretribulationalism. Therefore, we have chosen to closely examine this textual anomaly within a separate Article placed within the Addendum,[214] even as we must now continue our commentary of the inspired text that follows.

Myriads of Angels praise Jesus Christ

> **"[11]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; [12]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"** (Re. 5:11,12).

Following the great song of redemption recited by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, John suddenly beheld an innumerable number of angels surrounding the throne. To give us some idea of this great multitude John used the Greek word *myriad*, which in ancient times meant ten thousand. Ten-thousand times ten-thousand equals one-hundred million, and to that number John added thousands of thousands more – an immense number indeed.

Then, John heard their unified voices shouting with a loud voice "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and

[214]cf. Addendum Article: Pretribulationalism, page 471, and within that Article the Subtopic: Problematic Translation Anomaly found on page 475.

wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Angels had attended Jesus birth, and they had served Him during his life here upon the earth; now, they herald his victorious return to Heaven to receive his just inheritance.

All Creation Praises Jesus Christ

> **"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"** (Re. 5:13).

All of creation had suffered decay, corruption, and death when Adam sinned (cf. Ro.8:22), but now through the great victory gained by the second Adam, Jesus Christ, it is soon destined to be restored to its former glory. John heard every creature, including those that fly in the heavens above the earth, those who exist upon the earth's surface, those who burrow under the earth, as well as those creatures who live in the sea, praising Christ with one unified voice 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"** (Re.5:14).

The four living creatures added their own **amen,** and the twenty-four elders likewise fell down and joined all creation in worshiping the Father who sits upon the majestic throne and Christ the glorified Lamb who "liveth for ever and ever." ○

Revelation Chapter 6

As we reached the end of the text of Chapter 5, John had completed his writing concerning the "things that are" (cf. Re.1:19): things that are both on the earth and in Heaven. This writing had ended with Christ holding a seven-sealed scroll that had granted Him absolute authority over all that is upon the earth to do with as He wills. At this very moment, Jesus remains at the right hand of God the Father in Heaven, where He has already gained full dominion over the earth through his possession of the scroll that He had received from his Father's hand.

However, at the time of this writing, Jesus has not yet begun to set things into motion that will ultimately lead to his triumphal return to earth. The precise time of his victorious arrival on earth has been preordained by the Father, while the actions to carry it out have been delegated to his Son to implement at an appointed time – a precise time that is known only to the Father (cf. Mt. 24:36).

The Future-Prophetic Section

Here in Chapter 6, John begins recording those "things that shall be hereafter;" that is, those things that must occur both in his and also our future. In this future-prophetic section of the Revelation, we shall observe Jesus as He breaks open the seven seals of the scroll taken from the hand of his Father in Heaven to exercise and lay claim to his rightful inheritance and lordship over all that is contained within it. As each seal is broken open, a momentous event occurs upon the earth in reaction to the breaking of that seal.

It is important to note that the Lord Jesus does not originate, nor is He the author of the events that will take place upon the earth as the first four seals are broken open. They are in fact orchestrated by Satan in direct opposition to Jesus as He forces Satan's hand by setting into motion a seven-year program to bring this current age to an end; thus, making way for Jesus' glorious Kingdom Age on earth in which He will reign as

its sovereign King and presiding Judge. Only the events associated with the last two seals can be seen as coming forth from Christ, as He begins to combat Satan's nefarious efforts to dethrone Him.

That final seven-year period is seen to parallel Daniel's seventieth week.[215] Jesus also spoke of the events that are to occur within that seven-year period within his Olivet Discourse that are recorded in Matthew 24.[216] The first four seals encompass the first three-and-one-half years of that seven-year period, which we have placed along a timeline in Illustration 2 below. Jesus referred to this three-and-one-half-year period as the beginning of pain, sorrow, and travail (Greek, *ōō din*) like unto the extreme pang of childbirth that continually increases in intensity as the moment of birth approaches (cf. Mt. 24:8). Within the commentary that follows, relevant verses of the Olivet Discourse will be noted, as they relate to the breaking open of each seal in turn.

It may prove helpful to refer back to this illustration as we make our way through the first eight verses of this current chapter.

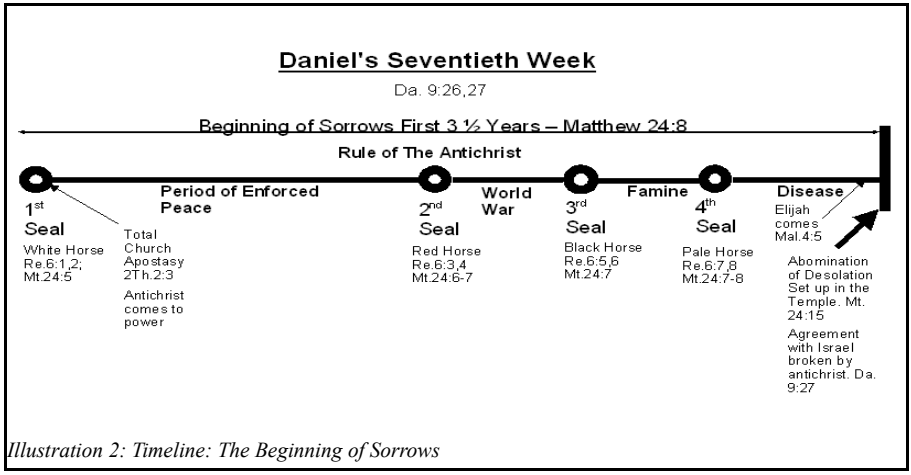

Illustration 2: Timeline: The Beginning of Sorrows

[215]cf. Addendum Article, The Seventieth Week of Daniel, page 530.

[216] cf. Addendum Article, Jesus' Olivet Discourse, page 537.

Jesus Prepares to Break Open the Seals

As we begin our exposition of the text of Revelation Chapter 6, we find that the Father's directive, which had been withheld for this very moment, has just been given to his Son to begin preparing the earth for his return. As directed by his Father, Jesus now begins breaking open the seals of the Heavenly scroll one-by-one to secure his rightful inheritance of the earth.

> **"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"** (Re. 6:1).

In keeping with the Jewish flavor and terminology of this vision, we find Jesus consistently being referred to as "the Lamb," as He breaks open the seven seals. Here we find that Jesus breaks open the very first seal. Whereas before, we observed one of the elders speaking to John to console him, here we find that it is one of the four living creatures who speaks to him from out of the throne in a thunderous voice saying, "come and see."[217]

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

As the first four seals are broken open four riders on four horses go fourth upon the earth. In the verses that follow, we must deal with considerable symbolism surrounding metaphoric horses and their esoteric "riders." The color of the "horses" describe the nature of the event that takes place, while the rider describes the principal force that directs and drives the event forward. This principal force may be a man exhibiting his personal moral evil, or a natural evil that has come about as a consequence of man's evil propensity.

These "riders" are commonly referred to as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (i.e. of the Revelation). Each "rider" goes forth on a "horse" having a different color: white, red, black, and pale or speckled.

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[217]This may be the same voice that John heard calling him up to Heaven in Revelation 4:1.

The Old-Testament prophet Zechariah had a vision of four chariots that were pulled by similarly colored horses:

> **"[1]*And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains* were *mountains of brass.* [2]*In the first chariot* were *red horses; and in the second chariot black horses;* [3]*And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses"*** (Zec.6:1-3).

The horse-drawn chariots represent four spirits that periodically govern the entire earth (cf. Zec. 6:5-8). These horses represent periods of war (red), death (black), peace (white), and pestilence (pale and speckled) that periodically spread out over the earth at various times.

While, the specific order of the colors of the horses given in Zechariah's vision are apparently random, here in the Revelation the order is very specific, since they pertain to a series of four calamitous events that are to come forth upon the earth in sequential order as Jesus breaks open the first four seals of the scroll.

The First Seal: the Antichrist Goes Forth to Conquer

> **"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"** (Re. 6:2).

The "white horse" as it is seen here is both a symbol of authority and of peace. The man who rides this horse will threaten and boast of his great power. Nevertheless, his boast appears to be empty inasmuch as we observe that he carries no arrows for his bow; the power he exercises are empty threats and mass deception that leads to a delusional peace gained through his self-assumed ability. We note that he wears a crown (given him by Satan), by which he claims to have gained sovereign authority over the entire earth. The principal rider of this horse is a politi-

cal Antichrist[218] in the sense that he opposes the true Christ by attempting to usurp his authority through political means.

In the human sense, the Antichrist's rise to power has come about because of unbridled human sin that had led to the immoral degeneration of societies, religious institutions, and governments culminating in moral chaos and political anarchy[219]. This societal collapse had caused mankind to become desperate for peace at any cost. For that reason, the Antichrist will be welcomed and acclaimed as the earth's rightful ruler to bring peace upon the earth through absolute force.

Nevertheless, the Antichrist's rise to power has been preordained in Heaven to come about as Jesus Christ breaks open the first seal of this scroll in order that God's divine purposes may be fulfilled in the Antichrist's ultimate failure to maintain peace upon the earth:

The Second Seal: Global War

> **"[3]And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. [4]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"** (Re, 6:3.4).

This time, it is a second living creature who speaks to John. During a brief time the Antichrist will have gained full control over the entire earth. Nevertheless, he has only brought about a tenuous delusion of peace; evil and corruption will continue to grow in the world like a festering sore until an eruption of violence becomes inevitable. The consequence of that underlying rebellion is revealed to John as Jesus Christ opens the second seal.

Now, a "red horse" (red signifying blood and war) will go forth upon the earth, 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 giv-

[218]cf. The first beast, Re.13:1-10; page 279.

[219] cf. Preamble to the Revelation on page 31.

en unto him a great sword." We are not told within this text what specific human events on earth have led up to the start of this great war. We are merely told that one individual or perhaps an organized group (represented by the horseman) has been given a formidable weapon. Whatever that "great sword" is, whether nuclear, chemical, or something far more destructive and deadly, is not stated.[220] That this is a global war is indicated by the words: "take peace from the earth." This great war will begin somewhere near the end of the first 3 ½ years of the reign of the political Antichrist, as we have indicated on our timeline of Daniel's seventieth week shown above on page 195.

The Third Seal: Global Famine

The great global war is likely to be over in a very short period of time assuming that very sophisticated weapons are utilized. The two horsemen that are yet to follow will most likely go forth in rapid succession one after the other as the inevitable aftermath of this highly destructive world-wide war is fully realized.

> **"[5]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. [6]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"** (Re. 6:5,6).

As Jesus breaks open the third seal, it is now the third living creature that bids John to "come and see." The black horse of famine will then go abroad upon the earth. Black is the color of mourning and despair; here black specifically represents the underlying cause of that mournful despair as an insatiable hunger.

A large percentage of the earth's population will have been killed as the land is blackened by the weapons of war. However, there will still be

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[220] Perhaps this great weapon will be deeply augmented with a superior artificial intelligence that makes it impossible to defeat until its "appetite" for death is fully satisfied.

a large population remaining, most of whom will starve to death because the processes of food production and delivery will have been completely destroyed.

Even so, we also find that a black market will spring up such that essential items as well as luxury items such as oil and wine can still be obtained by the rich and powerful, who alone can afford the highly exorbitant prices, while the far more numerous poorer classes will starve to death for want of the simplest necessities of diet.

The Fourth Seal: Death and the Grave

> **"[7]And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. [8]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"** (Re.6:7,8).

As Jesus breaks open the fourth seal, the fourth living creature speaks and commands John to "come and see." Global war brings forth much more than famine, for the pale horse represents plagues, and pestilence. This pale horse is a very sick horse, and it spreads its deadly illness in the form of a great pandemic over the entire earth; thus, instilling a state of panic within the remaining populace. This horseman's name is "Death," and the grave (Greek: *Hades*) follows after him. Although the earth will have suffered various pandemics in the past, this one will be extremely deadly inasmuch as there will be very poor sanitation conditions worldwide. Moreover, there will be no organized effort to contain it, and no medical infrastructure to perfect vaccines or to develop effective treatments for it.

Even the wild beasts of the earth, driven by hunger, will add to the human death toll. Those "wild beasts" may very well be literal wild animals whose populations will have grown enormously, as they feast upon the human flesh of the fallen. Nevertheless, they could metaphorically represent evil gangs of men and women motivated by hunger and greed

to kill for food and medicine like wild animals, as sinful men readily kill others in order to stave off hunger and starvation.

The Lord Jesus had spoken of this same time of global war, famine, pestilence, and death in his Olivet Discourse with these words,:

> ***"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places"*** (Mt.24:7).

The death rate during this time will be absolutely catastrophic: We are told in Revelation verse 8 above that twenty-five percent of the earth's population will die of starvation, pandemic disease, and all the violent upheaval associated with it. Considering the immense population still living on the earth at that future age, the death toll from the violent global war and its aftermath would be enormous, and the time ahead for those that survive will remain extremely bleak.

The Midpoint of Daniel's Seventieth Week

The culmination of this great global war and its terrible aftermath brings us to the mid-point of the seventieth week of Daniel. This mid-point was depicted earlier at the end of the timeline shown in Illustration 2 above on page 195, which represents the first half of Daniel's seventieth week, and it is depicted again below on page 203 at the beginning of the timeline of Illustration 3, which represents the last 3 1/2 years of this seven-year period.

The Fifth Seal: Martyred Souls under the Altar

> **"[9]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: [10]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?"** (Re.6:9,10).

When our Lord opened the fifth seal, John saw the souls of saints who had been "slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Undoubtedly, those spoken of in this verse are the countless God-fearing Jews who have been despised, mistreated, and systematically massacred over many centuries, as is strongly evidenced by the fact that they have been kept under an altar.

The altar referred to here is *thusiastē rion* in the Greek, the place of sacrifice, thus signifying devout Jews who had been slain for the Word of God and their unyielding testimony to it. It is reasonably certain that this altar is located within the majestic Temple in Heaven (cf. Re 11:19;15:5), which had served as a prototype for the wilderness Tabernacle as well as the later Temples of the Jews on earth.

These Jews seen here under the altar apparently are not recent arrivals, as we observe from their words, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Their call for revenge is justifiably based upon Old-Covenant law (cf. Ex. 21:24,25).

> **"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"** (Re.6:11)**.**

These Jews were given white robes indicative of their state of righteousness and as an assurance of their future redemption. They were told to patiently wait until their brethren and fellow servants of God should join them through martyrdom during a period of great tribulation that is about to come forth upon the earth:

The Great Tribulation

The brief interval of time between the fifth and sixth seal labeled as the great tribulation in Illustration 3 below was given that name by Jesus in his Olivet Discourse when He said:

> ***"For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not***

been from the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mt.24:21).

This specifically refers to a dreadful period of Jewish affliction following the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation within the third Temple (cf. Mt.24:15-21).[221] This time of great tribulation was also noted in Old Testament Scripture as the "time of Jacob's trouble" (cf. Je. 30:7).

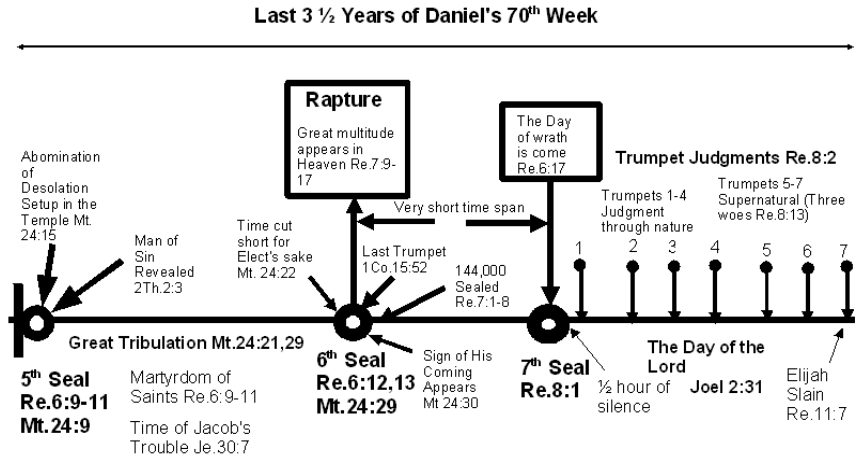

Illustration 3: Last 3 1/2 Years of Daniel's Seventieth Week

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In a desperate attempt to regain control of his disastrous failure to rule the world, the Antichrist will break his earlier agreement made with Israel as he causes the sacrifice and the offering to cease (cf. Da.9:27) and will insanely declare and forcefully attempt to establish himself as "God" in Jerusalem.[222] He will at that time place an image representing himself inside the rebuilt third Temple in Jerusalem. Thus, the "Abomi-

[221] cf. Article Third Temple of the Last Days on page 516 of the Addendum.

[222]The political Antichrist will have suffered a head wound in the great world war from which he was miraculously healed. However, he then became insane of mind wherein he was fully possessed by Satan (cf. Re.13:3; The Antichrist Survives a Deadly Wound, page 283).

nation of Desolation" will then be found standing where it should not ever be – within the Holy of Holies; thus, rendering the entire Temple complex unholy and desolate of any godly purpose (cf. Mt.24:15).

As a consequence of this desecration, the Jews who had originally looked to the Antichrist as their Messiah for their protection from their many enemies, will suddenly recognize him as the "man of sin" that he truly is (cf. 2Th.2:3). Their terribly misplaced faith in him will have left them destitute of both faith and hope, and in their state of confusion they will have no safe place to turn.

This desecration of the Third Temple begins a time of mass world-wide slaughter of Jews, as many others of their brothers join previously martyred Jews (cf. Re. 6:11) during a period of intense tribulation that lies ahead. Of all the persecutions that the Hebrew people have suffered, including the severe persecution under the Russian Czar and later during the German Holocaust under Adolph Hitler, this time of persecution will be far far worse for them (cf. Mt.24:21).

Semitic Jews have been tormented to this day because of the earlier rejection of their Messiah and by Satan's anger against them as being those of the nation who had brought Christ forth into the world (cf. Re.12:1-5; Ro.9:4,5). So severe will be the distress, persecution, and indiscriminate slaughter in the remaining time of this great human upheaval that no one could survive if the great tribulation were to last any longer than a short while:

> ***"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened"*** (Mt.24:22).

The Sixth Seal: The Tribulation Cut Short

For the sake of God's elect, both believing Jews and a remaining remnant of Gentile Christians,[223] Jesus will bring the chaotic violence to a swift conclusion as He breaks open the sixth seal of the scroll that He

[223] Although it is specifically Jews who are being systematically killed within this period, some of a smaller number of devout Christians remaining upon earth during that time will most likely be caught up in the indiscriminate slaughter as well.

holds in his hands. Up until this time, although preordained by God, the terrifying events of the last days have been carried out by Satan through the evil nature and depraved actions of reprobate men. Global war has taken a terrific toll through direct destruction and still more indirectly through famine, and disease.

Prelude to the Day of the Lord

The opening of the sixth seal represents a great turning point, for at this time, God through his Christ will begin to take direct action of his own through a series of extremely intense judgments. Men will have no doubt at all regarding the source of those future judgments inasmuch as they will come down through the created cosmos, from out of Heaven itself.

> **"[12]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; [13]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. [14]And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places"** (Re. 6:12-14)**.**

The first judgment of God begins as a massive earthquake violently shakes the entire earth from pole to pole. This massive earthquake will be so severe as to move mountains and islands out of their previous locations. At the same time, the sun will go dark, and the moon will turn blood-red in color before it finally also goes black. A great display of falling stars will be followed by a total blackening of the sky, as the greater heavens roll up like a scroll when the reading of it is finished. This great event was predicted in the prophecy of Joel as a prelude to the approaching Day of the Lord:

> ***"[30]And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. [31]The sun***

> ***shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come"*** (Jl. 2:30–31).

Jesus had also spoken of this great heavenly disturbance in his Olivet Discourse with these words,

> ***"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"*** (Mt. 24:29).

Luke likewise recorded Jesus as having spoken of this catastrophic celestial event in his Olivet Discourse with these words:

> ***[25]"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; [26]Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken"*** (Lu.21:25, 26).

As God spoke through the Prophet Haggai,

> ***"[6]For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry*** *land*; ***[7]And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts"*** (Hag. 2:6,7)**.**

As God shakes the heavens and the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ, the great joy of all nations, shall come forth to establish his Kingdom age upon the earth; whereupon, He will fill the Millennial Temple with his glory:

The Sign of Jesus Coming Appears

It is then that the sign of the "Son of man," Jesus Christ, will become clearly visible in the sky against the backdrop of total darkness to be clearly recognized by the multitudes upon the earth.

> ***"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"*** (Mt.24:30).

In Luke's Gospel we also read of Jesus saying that the ransomed of the earth will see his appearance as a sure sign that their ultimate redemption is very near, as they look up and see their redeemer returning in the clouds of Heaven[224] to receive them to Himself:[225]

> ***[27]"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. [28]And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh"*** (Lu. 21:27, 28)**.**

The Reprobate of Earth Moan in Fear and Trembling

While the remaining Gentile Christians and the believing Jews will view this event with great joy, the reprobate masses of the earth will moan and tremble in great fear. As the Apostle John stated in the preamble to this document,[226]

> **"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** (Re. 1:7).

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[224] The glory clouds are the *Shekinah* glory that will encompass the person of Jesus Christ during his return to the earth.

[225] cf. 1Th 4:16,17

[226] cf. John's Brief Preamble to the Prophecy, page 113.

Every man, woman, and child on earth will see the Lord Jesus coming down out of Heaven enclosed in clouds of great glory, including the Gentiles who had pierced Him and the Jew who had vehemently rejected Him. Every people-group on earth will wail when they see Him whom they had despised and had viciously rejected.

> **"[15]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; [16]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"** (Re.6:15,16).

Every depraved person living upon the earth, whether rich or poor, powerful or weak, will cease committing their insane acts of violence in an effort to see to their own personal well-being. Those who have the means to do so will hide themselves in caves or within the rocks of the mountains (cf. Is.2:19-21). It is obvious that caves and mountain projections actually represent more danger than safety against earthquakes, but that is not the point. They will be so infuriated and fearful of the visible presence of the face of Jesus Christ whom they see coming in the clouds of Heaven, that they will prefer to be buried in the rocks of the earth rather than submit and bow down before Him whom they had so long opposed, cursed, and hated.

While the reprobate of the earth mourn, the devout Jew seeing Christ appear in the heavens will immediately recognize Him as their true Messiah, and they shall experience a revival as the Holy Spirit is poured out upon them in great abundance:

> ***"[28]And it shall come to pass afterward,*** *that* ***I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: [29]And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those***

days will I pour out my spirit" (Jl. 2:28,29).

Joel was speaking directly to Jews in this prophecy, not to Christians, nor to the world at large. He speaks of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon their sons and daughters who will then prophesy; and their old men will dream great dreams, and their young men shall see visions. Even their servants and handmaids will have the Holy Spirit enter into them.

The Great Day of the Lord is Come

> **"For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"** (Re. 6:17).

The visible sign of Jesus Christ's coming in the heavens signals the beginning of a period mentioned thirty-one times in the Old and New Testaments as the "Day of the Lord." This period is depicted at the right end of the timeline in Illustration 3 on page 203. The "Day of the Lord" encompasses a period of time that begins in great darkness in preparation for God's judgment of the earth.

> ***"That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness"*** (Zep. 1:15; cf. Am. 5:18-20).

The Old-Testament prophet Malachi described that day with these words:

> ***"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch"*** (Mal. 4:1)**.**

The Old-Testament prophet Joel said,

> ***"Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come"*** (Jl. 1:15).

The Apostle Paul also spoke of this day of God's wrath in his first letter to the Thessalonians, which he characterized as coming very suddenly upon the reprobate without warning and without any possibility of their escape from its agonizing destruction:

> [2] ***"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*** [3] ***For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape"*** (1Th 5:2,3).[227]

This great Day of the Lord will begin as Jesus Christ breaks open the seventh seal and then unrolls the end of the scroll in his hands. In doing so He will have attained full authority to judge the earth in preparation for his return as its rightful King. He must first prosecute the fierce judgments of God upon the earth's rebellious populations to cleanse the earth of its iniquity in preparation for his return to establish his Kingdom age on earth in which righteousness alone will prevail.

Nevertheless, we find as we turn to Revelation Chapter 7 that a brief but very significant interval of time will take place before those fierce judgments commence. ○

[227] cf. Issues Regarding the Day of the Lord, on page 497 of the Addendum.

Revelation Chapter 7

The Interim Period between the Sixth and the Seventh Seal

Following the events of Chapter 6, in which the sign of Jesus Christ appeared in the sky and the reprobate had sought refuge from his wrath by burying themselves in the rocks and caves, one could reasonably expect God's judgment of the reprobate earth-dwellers to begin at once. However, we discover in the text of this chapter that a brief interval of time occurs before his wrathful judgment takes place.

Even during the worse periods of apostasy, God has maintained a small remnant of believers on earth who hold to the Truth as a witness of Him. Chapter 7 informs us of how God plans to ensure the safety of two such believing remnants before the period in which his fierce wrath must be fully unleashed against the ungodly without restraint.

> **"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree"** (Re. 7:1).

The four angels mentioned in this verse are angels of destruction, and the winds that they hold back represent God's righteous vengeance that must soon blow forth across the entire surface of the earth. The angels stand on the "four corners of the earth,"[228] thus informing us that not one square mile of the earth will be exempt from God's retribution when those winds of judgment are allowed to blow forth in all their fury.

The four angels have been holding back the winds of God's righteous vengeance, allowing men time to repent; nevertheless, the four an-

[228]This phrase does not intend to imply that the earth is a flat square or rectangle, as some critics of the Bible spout forth. These four "corners" merely stand for the four major compass points, which are north, south, east, and west.

gels were just about ready to release the four winds of destruction upon the ungodly when a fifth angel suddenly appears upon the scene:

> **"[2]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, [3]Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads"** (Re.7:2,3).

Sealing of 144,000 from the Nation of Israel

This angel[229] exercising greater authority than the other four is seen ascending up from the east much as the sun rises in the morning. This angel carries with him "the seal of the living God," and he immediately commands that the four angels of destruction delay the release of the winds of retribution until this seal can be applied to the foreheads of the loyal servants of God that must remain upon the earth.

In Jesus' Olivet Discourse He said,

> ***"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"*** (Mt.24:31).

The Elect Jesus referred to here in his discourse are the chosen remnant of Israel, who must be gathered together in order to receive the seal of God for their physical protection. A seal signifies both ownership and protection. God's claim of ownership implies his possession and control over this Jewish remnant for his specific purpose. So terrible will be the affliction coming forth from the seven trumpet judgments to come that none of them could survive without having the seal of God's ownership and protection upon them. Therefore, this brief pause has taken place to ensure that there will be a surviving remnant from the nation of Israel.

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[229]Although we cannot be certain about the identity of the angel carrying the seal of the living God, we speculate that he would most probably be the archangel Michael, who has ever guarded and protected Israel (cf. Da. 12:1; Jude v. 9).

> **"And I heard the number of them which were sealed:** *and there were* **sealed a hundred** *and* **forty** *and* **four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel"** (Re.7:4).

Here we are given the precise number of the elect descendants (children) of Israel. To ensure that this remnant representing all of Israel will survive the great judgments ahead, twelve-thousand men descended from each of the twelve tribes of Israel will be sealed in advance of the onslaught of God's judgment.

> **"[5]Of the tribe of Judah** *were* **sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben** *were* **sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad** *were* **sealed twelve thousand. [6]Of the tribe of Aser** *were* **sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Naphtali** *were* **sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses** *were* **sealed twelve thousand. [7]Of the tribe of Simeon** *were* **sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi** *were* **sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar** *were* **sealed twelve thousand. [8]Of the tribe of Zebulun** *were* **sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph** *were* **sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin** *were* **sealed twelve thousand."** (Re.7:5–8).

In these four verses, each of the tribes of Israel are specifically named and the precise number of twelve thousand is given for the sealed of each tribe. It must be noted that when compared with the original listing found in Numbers Chapter 1, that the tribes of Dan and Ephraim have been omitted in this listing. Those two tribes had led the Jewish people into idolatry at the time of the division of the kingdom, such that any remnant of them that remain in that day will not be sealed.

As to Dan, they had set up false gods and had abandoned the Temple in Jerusalem:

> ***"[28]Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel,***

> ***which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*** [29]***And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.*** [30]***And this thing became a sin: for the people went*** *worship* ***before the one,*** *even* ***unto Dan."*** (1Ki.12:28–30).

As to Ephraim, those of this tribe had completely given themselves over to the worship of idols. God said regarding them,

> ***"***[17]***Ephraim*** *is* ***joined to idols: let him alone.*** [18]***Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers*** *with* ***shame do love, Give ye.*** [19]***The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices"*** (Ho.4:17-19).

Therefore, we find in this list that the tribe of Joseph has apparently taken the place of the tribe of Ephraim and that the priestly tribe of Levi, who had inherited no land in Israel, has apparently taken the place of the tribe of Dan.

Although none from the tribes of Ephraim and Dan will be sealed to witness, this would not exclude a remnant of them from entering the Millennial Kingdom such that all Israel that are truly of Israel will ultimately be saved (cf. Ro. 9:6; 11:26; Zec. 13:1). Any remaining descendants of these two tribes must endure the great wrath to come without the benefit of God's seal upon them.

It must be noted that some have erroneously asserted that the Elect who are sealed are members of the Church. For instance, there remains to this day a broad movement within Great Britain, dating back to the sixteenth century, which is commonly known as British Israelism or Anglo-Israelism. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin had returned to Jerusalem after their captivity in Babylon, but the ten northern tribes never again returned after their Assyrian captivity, but had instead become dispersed throughout the Gentile world. This movement claims that the peoples of the United Kingdom are "genetically, racially, and

linguistically" descended from the ten northern tribes of Israel, which had historically lost their Jewish identity.[230]

Nevertheless, the very specific language and context of verses 5 thru 8 denies any possibility of them being anything other than elect Jews who have been called out of the greater nation of Israel, such that all of Israel will be saved through them (cf. Ro.11:25,26). The precise listing of each tribe of Israel by name makes it quite clear that the ten northern tribes that were dispersed were never lost to the mind of God. Therefore, any allegorical attempt to say that those tribes of Israel actually represent ten divisions of the Church is without foundation and would thus constitute a very extreme rendering of the text.

The nation of Israel was intended to be a witness to the entire world of God's absolute authority over and benevolent love for mankind. As a nation, Israel had failed to live up to that high calling and faithfulness of purpose to the extent that when their Messiah finally arrived to gather his people unto Himself, they vehemently rejected Him. Moreover, they treacherously put Him to death by manipulating the highly suppressive decrees of their hated Roman occupiers to carry out that despicable act.

Yet, God's divine purpose had not been thwarted; for through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, his glorious Church was born upon the earth through the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Thus, we find that the Church had displaced unfaithful Israel as God's true witness upon the earth for a considerable span of time – which we commonly refer to as the Church Age.

The Church Appears in Heaven

During the period of devastating trumpet-judgments to come forth following Jesus' opening of the seventh seal of the Heavenly scroll, a redeemed remnant of Israel will once again become God's sole witnesses of Him on earth, as the redeemed remnant of believers making up the true Church are miraculously translated into an immortal state and are

[230] Another group known as the Russelites, making up an American cult commonly known as Jehovah's Witness (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 376), have also attempted to identify themselves with this 144,000.

rapidly transported off the earth to meet with Christ in the air. This rapid removal of the Church, commonly referred to as the Rapture,[231] constitutes the second purpose for this brief pause just before the seven and last seal of the scroll is broken open and the terrifying trumpet-judgments begin.

From his vantage point in Heaven, John did not see or record the Church as it left the earth. Instead, he documented its triumphal arrival in Heaven, as a great multitude that had suddenly appeared before him:

> **"[9]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; [10]And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb"** (Re.7:9,10).

The words "after this" that begins verse 9 refers to the sealing of the one-hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel. Immediately after that sealing, John saw a great multitude of people suddenly appear before God's throne in Heaven. So many were they that John made no attempt to put forth any estimate of their number, as he had regarding an incredibly great company of angels that he had previously observed (cf. Re.5:11).

This great multitude was mostly composed of Gentiles from every conceivable background, and they represented every nationality on earth. They were of every kindred: both male and female, young and old of many generations. They were of every ethnic group ever found upon the earth and of every possible skin color. They had previously spoken many native languages, but here John saw them all united as one standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

They were all clothed in bright white garments, which is indicative of their righteous state as children of God, and they carried palm leaves

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[231]cf. Topic: Regarding Our Frequent Use of the Word "Rapture" on page 84 and Article: The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church, page 492 in the Addendum.

in their hands as a token of the great victory they had received through Christ as they had overcome the world through their faith in Him (cf. 1Jn.5:4). They loudly proclaim with one unified shout of praise and adoration regarding the sole source of their salvation – fully attributing it to God who sits upon the throne and unto his Christ, "the Lamb of God," through whose death and resurrection they have now received their perfect and final redemption.

> **"[11]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, [12]saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might,** *be* **unto our God for ever and ever. Amen"** (Re.7:11,12).

The angels that stand around the throne in the company of the four beasts and the twenty-four elders are sinless beings who would find it difficult to comprehend the concept of redemption. Those angels of their kind that had followed Lucifer in his rebellion against God were first cast out of Heaven down to a barren primitive earth (cf. Re.12:9). For their continued rebellion and role in their later corruption of mankind, they are soon to be cast into outer darkness – forever.

Therefore, while observing the appearance of this great company of redeemed mankind who were praising God, the loyal angels were understandably overwhelmed by what God had accomplished. They could but fall on their faces along with the Twenty-four Elders and the four living creatures giving praise to their God for his great wisdom and omnipotence through which nothing is impossible for Him to accomplish (cf. Mt. 19:26).

> **"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.** (Re.7:13,14a).

The fact that one of the twenty-four elders asked John who those making up this great multitude were and where they had come from, indicates that John should have instinctively known the answer to that question. Surely, John had given rapid thought to where this great multi-

tude had suddenly come from and who they may be, but could he dare hope that this massive assemblage consisting of men and women of every nation and kindred of peoples and tongues were the redeemed descendants of the struggling and persecuted Church that he knew so well at the end of the first century?

It is likely that John was so overwhelmed by their great number and diversity that he dared not express that hope aloud. Instead, he deferred to the elder to speak aloud that which he so greatly desired to hear as he humbly answered him with, "Sir thou knowest." So prompted, the elder fully understanding John's reticence, replied in turn:

> **"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** (Re. 7:14b).

As is made evident by the earlier phrase "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" in verse 9, this multitude is without doubt the redeemed Church largely made up of many multiple generations of Gentiles. They were the Elect of every nation, yet had constituted one body over all the earth. Therefore, this is most assuredly the universal Church of all ages, which John saw appearing before him as it had arrived in Heaven victorious from the intense spiritual warfare it had endured upon the earth.

Nevertheless, the phrase stating that this multitude had come "out of great tribulation" has caused many Bible expositors to declare that this great company are but a unique body of believers who had been martyred during the "great tribulation period" of the last days, and as such they do not represent the Raptured Church.[232] They note that those who make up this great multitude are similarly dressed in white, as were the saints hidden under the altar in Revelation Chapter 6 verses 9-11. However, we have previously ascertained in this Commentary that those

[232]Following the teaching of John Nelson Darby, most Dispensationalists believe that the Church had been caught up to Heaven earlier before Jesus had broken open the first seal of the scroll in Heaven (cf. article on Dispensationalism, on page 460 of the Addendum).

were not Christians, but were God-fearing Jews who had been martyred for their firm stand for God and his Word (cf page 201).

The Temporal Price and Eternal Reward of Redemption

Any true Christian knows full well that there is a tremendous temporal price to pay when they truly accept Christ and pick up their own cross of suffering to follow after Him (cf. Lu. 9:23). Although the joy and peace that they experience with God is wonderful, they must suffer loss in this world, for the world hates them as irrational alien beings that do not correspond to their secular view of the world. As we find recorded in the very words of Jesus,

> ***"[18]If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before*** *it hated* ***you. [19]If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. [20]Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you..."***(Jn. 15:18-20).

For some Christians, the road of redemption will be a little rough, for others it will be very difficult, and for some it will be extremely painful. It has always been a way of trial and affliction for those who follow Christ – often the way of blood. Nevertheless, the peace we receive from Christ in return is ultimately worth it all:

> ***"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"*** (Jn.14:27).

Narrowly accepting a strict Dispensational interpretation of this passage in an attempt to avoid considering the suffering of the Church under the rule of the Antichrist would be to totally dismiss the reality of the great tumults, trials, and tribulations that countless generations of Christians have experienced under despotic rulers ever since the Church's in-

ception on the day of Pentecost in the first century.[233] The history of the Church is replete with wave after wave of persecutions in which many devout believers in Christ were not only hated for his name sake, but suffered loss; and large numbers of them were martyred.[234] Even greater numbers of believers are being persecuted and martyred world-wide today, and that number will only increase as we approach the perilous last days of this current age.

Hence, we conclude that this great multitude that John saw will be composed of those men and women – both the transformed living and the resurrected and transformed dead in Christ who were caught up to meet with Him in the air at the conclusion of the brief but very intense period of tribulation upon the earth (cf. 1Th.4:16,17).

> **"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"** (Re. 7:15).

The word "temple" found in this verse is somewhat problematic inasmuch as we are told that ultimately there will be no Temple within Heaven. The place of worship in Heaven will no longer be a physical house "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (cf. Re.21:22). God will dwell among and within his redeemed people as they joyously serve Him. To some extent this is already true of the Church on earth, but it will reach its true reality when the Church finds its place before the throne of God and of the Lamb in Heaven.

At long last, we find that the Church will be at rest, having completed her spiritual warfare on earth in the face of great satanic opposition.

> **[16]They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sunlight on them, nor any heat. [17]For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of**

[233]cf. Addendum Article Pretribulationalism: The Tribulation of the Church, page 512.

[234]cf. *CRC* book III, pages 37-40, 94-98, 128-131, etc.

waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Re.7:16,17).

In this text, we find that the faithful who have been gathered at last in Heaven before the Throne of God will never again hunger or thirst or experience the heat of persecution,[235] inasmuch as the "Lamb," which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them and shall lead them unto "living fountains of water." The past tribulation and great distress that they had suffered on earth will be forgotten as if it had never happened as God wipes away all tears from their eyes. ○

[235]There will be no sun within the new creation to provide light for the New earth, for the glory of God will enlighten it through Christ who will be the light thereof. (cf. Re. 21:23; The Glory of God and the Lamb Illuminates the Entire Earth, Addendum page 411).

Revelation Chapter 8

Having sealed 144,000 Jews to safely remain upon the earth as a witness of Him, and having removed his beloved Church off the earth to be with Him in the Heavenly realm, we find that the Lord Jesus Christ will then send forth seven extremely severe judgments upon the reprobate inhabitants remaining on earth that had rejected Him.

Those seven judgments are symbolized in Scripture by the blowing of seven trumpets by seven angels. This period of "trumpet judgments," is labeled on the right end of Illustration 3: Last 3 1/2 Years of Daniel's Seventieth Week found on page 203 as the "Day of the Lord," which immediately follows the breaking open of the seventh seal by Christ. The Day of the Lord is both an Old and New Testament term for this specific period of God's fierce judgment.[236]

The seven trumpet judgments are divided into two groups consisting of four initial judgments brought about through great disturbances from the created heavens, followed by three supernatural judgments having no underlying basis in physical creation. During the first four judgments, our Lord will bring about a series of catastrophic events upon the earth that are sent down out of the vast regions of the cosmos. They will cause massive physical destruction and will inflict great physical and emotional pain upon the earth's inhabitants. We are not given a specific interval of time between the first four trumpet judgments once they begin. They could immediately follow one after another, or there could be a short pause of days, or weeks or perhaps months between them.

The interpretation presented here concerning the first four trumpet judgments is based upon a hypothetical probability of the earth being approached in the early part of that period by a relatively large celestial mass, perhaps a "rogue" star, or an interstellar mega-comet or great burning asteroid, that is supernaturally guided by God for that purpose. While it cannot be dogmatically stated that the approach of a large inter-

[236]cf. Is.2:12; 13:6; Je.46:10; Eze.30:3; Jl.2:11; Am.5:18; Obad.1:15; Zep.1:7; Zec:14:1; Mal. 4:5; Ac.2:20; 1Co.5:5; 1Th.5:2; 2Th.2:2; 2Pe.3:10.

stellar mass will be the natural causation underlying the catastrophes coming forth from the sounding of the first four trumpets, it is a reasonable assumption based upon what we find in the text of Revelation Chapter 8 verse 10 regarding an approaching "star."

Most of today's astrophysicists concede that there is a high probability of a collision or near collision with the earth by a large celestial body sometime in the future, inasmuch as there is very strong evidence that such cataclysmic events have occurred in the past upon other planets, the earth, and most notably evidenced by the many craters found upon its moon. Almost weekly, we hear reports of large asteroids passing between the earth and our sun. Therefore, it is only a matter of time until a major encounter occurs; and should an extremely large celestial mass target the earth, it would prove to be disastrous for the earth's dense wide-spread population.[237]

Regardless of any underlying natural causes that may be in evidence, we must clearly understand that all four of those judgments will be in accordance with God's preordained will and through his express command – as was God's earlier judgment of the earth's reprobate population in the global flood of Noah's day.[238] Those future catastrophic events cannot come about as the consequence of a mere "chance" encounter with a celestial body, inasmuch as God will shelter the earth's population from such massive calamities until He determines that the

[237]We note that as recently as 2019, a football-field-sized asteroid moving at 55,000 miles per hour passed by within 48,000 miles of the earth. It had been totally undetected until about 24 hours before this close encounter took place. If it had struck an earth's landmass, the impact could have destroyed a major city, with additional devastation extending outward within a 25 mile radius from its epicenter. Before and since that time, powerful modern telescopes have revealed that many sizable stellar masses are regularly entering our solar system – many passing quite near the earth. Any one of these would cause serious devastation should it impact the earth.

[238]We have postulated that a similar event involving a close-passing mega-comet most likely brought forth the great Ice Epoch on earth in which the great mammoths were destroyed. As well, we contemplated that it was very possibly the natural causation of the great Noachian flood initiated by God in which the earth's human population was annihilated, saving only Noah and his immediate family to repopulate the earth (cf. Newsletter Article, August 2015).

hour and day requiring his necessary judgment of the increasingly sinful population of the earth has come.

Jesus Breaks Open the Seventh Seal

We shall now undertake a direct exposition of the text of Revelation Chapter 8, as Jesus breaks open the final seal of the great scroll in Heaven:

Thirty Minutes of Silence

> **"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour"** (Re.8:1).

As Jesus Christ breaks open the last seal of the scroll, He will have attained all power and the authority that is written within it to take full possession of the earth and to judge it and its populace in preparation for his sovereign rule over it.

The brief period of silence[239] that follows the breaking of the seventh seal is very ominous, especially so in view of the tremendous noise and violence that had previously taken place upon the earth. It is almost as if our Lord winces and takes a deep breath concerning the severity of the great judgments that He must now prosecute against a rebellious nonredeemable mankind. This fierce judgment is a strange work for God to undertake, inasmuch as He is a God of love and is long-suffering, taking no pleasure in the death of any man whom He had created in his own image (cf. Ez.18:32; Ge. 1:27). However, at this point in time, his striving with rebellious mankind has reached its limit, and his fierce judgment becomes absolutely necessary to defend his sovereign honor. The reprobate have continually and with finality refused all that the Father had offered including the sacrifice of the Son of his very being – who must now act as their judge.

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[239]The Greek word *hēmiō rion* translated here as "hour" can be literally translated as sixty minutes or figuratively translated as a relatively short period of time.

During this brief period of silence, John observes rapid preparation taking place in Heaven, which he describes in the next four verses.

Seven Angels Given Seven Trumpets

> **"And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets"** (Re.8:2).

During this quiet period, seven angels have assembled themselves before God. They will have been given seven trumpets to announce each coming judgment at the very moment that God orders them to take place. Nevertheless, it is not God the Father who will send forth these judgments, for all authority over the earth has been committed unto the Son to carry out all of his judgments of depraved man (cf. Jn. 5:22). The contrast between the meek and mild-mannered Jesus who had once humbly walked among men and in great love had died for them, and the glorified Christ (cf. Re. 1:13-16), whom we see here preparing to carry out the severe sentence of God's righteous verdict, is unfathomable indeed.

However, it must be seen as poetic justice that He who had redeemed many through his own blood should now severely deal with reprobate sinners who had angrily rejected his compassionate offer of redemption. They have hated Him, persecuted his Elect, and have so hardened their hearts that their repentance is no longer possible. The only thing they can justifiably receive in exchange for their rejection of God's mercy is the "wrath of the Lamb."

The Prayers of the Saints Presented before God

> **"[3]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 [4]and the smoke of the incense,** *which came*

> **with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand"** (Re. 8:3,4).

The angel who came to stand at the altar of incense is one whose apparent task it has been to record and store up the innumerable prayers of those many saints who had suffered persecution and had been martyred at the hands of evil men for the firm stand that they had taken for God and his Christ over all of mortal time.

The golden censer that the angel holds is a vessel specifically designed to hold burning incense; nevertheless, the angel first burns the incense that it contains upon a golden altar standing before the throne of God.[240] This angel has been given an abundance of incense to burn on the golden altar in the throne-room of Heaven, such that the devout prayer of every saint who had ever lived ascended up in the smoke of burning incense from the altar before God the Father, who sits upon his eternal throne in Heaven.

> **"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"** (Re.8:5).

This action, which had presented the prayers of the saints of all time before God thus completed, the angel then takes fire from the altar of burning incense and filling his censor with that fire he casts its contents down into the earth. The thirty minutes of silence is suddenly broken by the sounds of many voices as the devout prayers of martyred saints immemorial are audibly broadcast down to earth. The just accusations stated within their prayers are punctuated by angry thunder claps as the storm of God's righteous indignation approaches the earth, and lightning extending from it begins to fill the sky and violently strikes the earth causing it to tremble and greatly quake.

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[240] A type of this heavenly altar was represented by the golden altar of incense that stood in the holy place of the Old-Covenant Temple before the heavy veil leading into the Holy of Holies – which had symbolized the eternal throne-room of God.

The Seven Angels Ready Their Trumpets

> **"And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound"** (Re.8:6).

The seven angels which had the seven trumpets now take their places and lift their trumpets, as each stands ready to sound – only awaiting the command of Christ to be given. All of this sounds very symbolic, but as we shall discover in the text that follows, the effect of each trumpet as it is sounded will be very real and devastating. There will be nothing symbolic about the coming judgments as they impact the earth and its fragile environment.[241]

Not since the great flood of Noah's day has such catastrophic judgment been rained down upon the earth. This time the judgment will not be in the form of a heavy deluge of water, but a heavy deluge of burning fire coming down from out of the cosmos.

For thirty minutes nothing happens on earth as the significance of this ominous silence slowly begins to set in; it is literally the lull before the mighty storm of God's vengeance breaks forth in all its fury.

The First Trumpet: One-third of Vegetation Destroyed

> **"The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up"** (Re.8:7).

When the first trumpet sounds, one-third of all the plant life on the earth will be immediately destroyed. Its destruction will come forth in the form of fiery debris out of the cosmos as the great celestial cataclysm, triggered by the breaking of the sixth seal, begins to reach the earth (cf. Re.6:13).

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[241] The foolish and expensive efforts by today's radical environmentalists to save the earth will have come to naught as God begins to systematically wreck their beloved environment before their very eyes.

This fire from Heaven is selective and is not intended to directly kill men. Instead, it will burn up every form of vegetation from all green grass to many great trees much as when God had earlier sent a great hail mingled with fire upon the land of Egypt (cf. Ex. 9:22–25). This mass burning of vegetation will severely reduce the oxygen level in the air making breathing more difficult, even as it will greatly reduce the availability of various kinds of food crops.

Apparently this destruction will not occur all in one place, but will be distributed across various regions over the entire earth. We are told that only one-third of the already scarce vegetation will have been burned up by the burning hail so that all of mankind will not immediately starve. However, the second trumpet is about to sound!

The Second Trumpet: One-third of Sea-life Destroyed

> **"[8]And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; [9]and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed"** (Re.8.:8,9).

From the phrase, "as it were" that John used in this verse, we realize that this "great mountain" is not a literal mountain. Even so, it must be a very large physical mass much like a mountain in size that is burning with fire, and is cast into the sea.

Some speculate that this great burning mass signifies the explosion of a super-volcano somewhere upon the earth that is then thrown into the sea through a massive explosion. This explosion may have been caused by the increased gravitational pull upon the crust of the earth, resulting from the approach of a large mass from out of the cosmos. Alternatively, it could be a large burning asteroid coming down out of space or perhaps a large piece that has broken off of a larger approaching mass that then falls into an ocean. We are left to speculate here, for the text does not specifically tell us where this great burning "mountain" comes from.

Whatever this huge burning mass is, it will destroy one-third of the smallest of fish up to and not excluding one-third of the ships of men, which will then be the main means of transport for scarce food stuffs to various fire-blackened parts of the earth. Again we find that two-thirds of the earth's seas and that which is contained within them will remain unaffected. Nevertheless, the third trumpet is about to sound!

The Third Trumpet: One-third of Fresh Water Poisoned

> **"[10]And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; [11]and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter"** (Re.8:10,11).

Here we are told that a "great star" falls from heavens. The word for "star" in this verse is *astare* in the Greek, which means it could be any one of any number of luminaries that are "strewn across the sky." *Astare* can be interpreted literally or figuratively. Assuming it to be a literal star, it would necessarily be a huge burning mass of gas that is somewhat similar to that of the earth's sun. It could as well be a very large comet. If so, it would have a small solid core of matter, yet would be largely made up of burning gas. It could also be a huge burning asteroid. Again, we are left to speculate here, for the text does not give us information regarding the physical make-up of this "great star."

The burning gases of this cosmic visitor from space entering into the upper atmosphere will pollute the rainfall and thereby affect one-third of the rivers and streams extending over the earth from which men get their drinking water. This star has a name, which is "wormwood." Wormwood taken from the Greek means "bitter." The infected waters will have a very bitter taste;[242] thus, warning of its toxic quality, and render-

[242]There are many toxic substances that have a bitter taste such that it is impossible to determine what particular substance is infecting the water. It should also be noted that even some non-toxic substances have a bitter taste.

ing the water altogether undrinkable. Any who would dare drink of the bitter water will become very ill, and many will die.

Again, we find that this judgment does not affect the entire earth since two-thirds of the fresh water supply around the earth will not be affected – but now, the fourth angel is about to blow his trumpet!

The Fourth Trumpet: One-third of the Sky is Darkened

> **"And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise"** (Re.8:12)

When the fourth trumpet sounds, one-third of the day and one-third of the night will be "smitten" and become absent of light. We should not think that the sun and moon will appear to have a "bite" taken out of them, such as we briefly observe during an eclipse. Rather, the last part of this verse clarifies the first part: "the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise." That is, the day will be shortened of sunlight, and the night will be shortened of light from the moon and stars. The sun will not shine on earth until it is well elevated into the heavens, and it will be dark well before it again reaches the earth's horizon. In a similar manner, the moon will not be visible for one-third of the night. Stars would not be visible at all near the horizon; only two-thirds of the stars will remain visible.

It is quite possible that this darkness will be brought about by great amounts of cosmic debris and fire that had come with the approach of the "great star" of verse 10, which has caused the lower atmosphere to become nearly opaque to the extent that the sun's rays cannot penetrate it at all near the horizon. The net result will be a great increase in darkness upon the earth; which would also cause its overall temperature to dramatically fall, possibly resulting in a global winter.

Three Woes Define the Judgments to Come

The earth's environment will have been completely wrecked by the catastrophic events of the first four judgments, but a far worse calamity is soon to be experienced by the reprobate earth dwellers as the last three angels prepare to sound their trumpets:

> **"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound"** (Re.8:13)!

The terrifying significance of the last three trumpet judgments, are punctuated by this flying angel shouting, "Woe, Woe, Woe, to those inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound." We shall discuss those last three judgments in some detail as we move on into Chapter 9 and beyond. In contrast to the first four trumpet judgments, those last three judgments will be brought about by God through supernatural means, the likes of which is beyond the scope of all natural human experience. ○

Revelation Chapter 9

In this chapter we shall discuss the first two of the three remaining trumpet judgments, which the flying angel had earlier announced as three grievous "woes" (cf. Re.8:13).[243]

The sounding of the first four trumpets had brought great physical destruction upon the earth through diverse judgments coming down from out of the created cosmos. As severe as those judgments were, the worse is yet to come; for in the next two judgments that are to follow, God will permit the supernatural power of the underworld to be unleashed as a tool of his righteous Judgment of man's iniquity.

This dark invisible underworld is led by Satan, who is a fallen archangel originally given the highly exalted name Lucifer (son of the morning). When iniquity was discovered in him (cf. Ez. 28:15), God cast him and his fallen angels (i.e. demons), whom Lucifer had fully infected with his iniquity, out of Heaven and down upon a dark, watery, unformed, and desolate earth (cf. Ge. 1:2).[244]

Man's Worship of Satan and Demons

The worship of Satan began when Adam, through Eve, believed the words of Satan over the Word of God, and took upon himself the sole responsibility for determining that which is good and that which is evil, as he disobediently partook of the fruit of the tree of good and evil. The strange attraction of evil was thereafter so strong that man commonly preferred it over that which was good. This made him highly susceptible to the influence of Satan's demons to the extent that men unconsciously did their bidding out of blind ignorance. Thus, demons are responsible for much of the insane activity that has led to

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[243] The seventh trumpet, the third woe, will not be encountered until we reach Chapter 11.

[244]Hence, Satan's presence on earth, along with all of his demons, predates the creation of Adam and his vast progeny that now populates the entire surface of the earth, under which a great many of Satan's more egregious demons have been kept sealed within a "bottomless pit."

the religious apostasy, moral corruption, and political anarchy that we have described within the preamble to this book.[245] The worship of demons soon led to full demon possession of many, wherein their minds were so deeply infected with heinous demonic thoughts that they committed many despicable criminal acts including mass murder – without any evident underlying cause.

Ultimate Demon Possession

Within the text of Chapter 9, Satan's dark spiritual kingdom and its nefarious agenda is exposed in stark reality, as the power of his demonic underworld is unleashed against reprobate mankind who had foolishly blasphemed God and had worshiped Satan and his demons. This text constitutes the very substance of the worst nightmares that mankind had previously experienced only in their most chaotic dreams. For demons, which had previously been forbidden to indwell men, will be released from their prison within the bottomless pit and given free reign to do as they wish with the sinful rebellious men and women that still remain upon the earth. Demons will inflict unbearable mental anguish upon them, and there will be no escape from their torment possible – not even through death that is held back from them!

None of the previous four trumpet judgments, although extremely severe, can be compared to these next two judgments for instilling pure terror in the hearts of men. Just to contemplate it in this study is bone-chilling, and then to realize that Jesus, our beloved Lord, must be the one to set it all into motion is very hard for us to accept. After all, Jesus did not come "into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (cf. Jn.3:17). Nevertheless, by this time the redeemed remnant of Israel will have been sealed (cf. Re.7:1-8) or will have been led away into a place of safety (cf. Re.12:14), and Jesus' beloved Church will now safely abide with Him in Heaven (cf. Re.7:9,10). In that sense, the world of mankind will have been fully re-

[245]While demons are the primary cause of iniquity, men must be held responsible for their actions arising from that evil infiltration.

deemed; nevertheless, the earth still remains deeply infected with Satan's iniquity.

Therefore the savior of the world must now pass judgment on his enemies, who had vehemently rejected Him, and had fought hard against his gracious efforts to save his own out of this fallen world. Jesus' harsh judgments will be seen to intensify until the reprobate become totally crushed beneath his feet (cf. Ps.110:1), and all of the earth has become cleansed of Satan's iniquity. This must be accomplished in preparation for Christ's coming Kingdom Age on earth over which He must reign within a state of perfect righteousness.[246]

With the preceding discourse as preliminary background, we shall now proceed to exposit the inspired text of Revelation Chapter 9:

The Fifth Trumpet Sounds: Satan Falls to Earth

> **"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"** (Re. 9:1).

When the fifth angel blew his trumpet, John saw a star fall from Heaven to earth. Unlike the physical star (Greek *astare*) described in the third trumpet judgment, the pronoun "him" is used here to personify this "star." This "star" is most certainly the fallen archangel Lucifer (i.e. Satan). As we find in Luke 10:18, the Lord Jesus said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven." Jesus said this in response to his disciples joy in having power over Satan's demons (cf. Lu.10:19).

In the Greek, "bottomless pit" found in verse 9 is *abussos phrear* meaning an extremely deep dark shaft, an abyss, or chasm, the bottom of which cannot be determined. By implication, this abyss is also a prison, for the Apostle Peter tells us in his second epistle that fallen angels (i, e. demons) have been imprisoned within just such a place: "...God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2Pe.2:4). The Greek word translated as Hell in this verse is *tar-*

[246]Cf Addendum Article, The Millennial Age on Earth, page 614.

taroo, meaning the very deepest part of an abyss.[247] In Luke 8:31 we find that the demons, whom Jesus had cast out of a man who lived within the tombs, feared being sent into the "deep," which translated from the Greek word *abussos* into English means abyss. Those demons who were still at large during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry greatly feared being sent into this deep bottomless pit with others of their kind.[248]

The opening to this deep abyss has been closed and sealed, thus requiring a "key" to open it. We note in this verse that the key to this bottomless pit was voluntarily given to Satan. The Greek word *kleis* used here may describe a physical key or it can be interpreted figuratively to mean a specifically granted authority to open that which has been shut. Inasmuch as the Lord Jesus now holds the keys to *Hades* and to death (cf. Re.1:18), we could assume that it is Jesus Christ who purposely provides the key to this deep abyss to Satan, thus permitting him to open it.

Satan Opens 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"** (Re.9:2).

Satan will then open the "pit of the deep abyss" where the most evil of his minions have been held captive since their earlier expulsion from

[247]This deep pit is not eternal Hell as this unfortunate *AKJV* miss-translation would seem to indicate. Hence, some Bible expositors have attempted to equate this abyss with *Hades,* an intermediary place where the souls of fallen men currently reside after the death of their bodies to await their final judgment before the Great White Throne (cf. Article: The Intermediate State of the Dead, page 600). Nevertheless, there is no indication whatsoever that demons reside in this intermediate place along with the souls of men, nor do men at any time occupy this deep pit along side demons. Therefore, we must conclude that this deep pit has been uniquely prepared to imprison Satan and his demons, prior to their ultimate release and eternal incarceration in Hell.

[248] This would indicate that not all of Satan's demons had been incarcerated in the bottomless pit, but that some along with Satan himself had been allowed limited freedom to roam about upon the surface of the earth.

Heaven. There is little doubt that this great abyss is a literal place, as is Heaven and Hell, but speculation abounds regarding its precise nature and location. Its mouth (or opening) must be located somewhere upon the earth,[249] inasmuch as when it was opened by Satan smoke coming forth from it filled the "air and darkened the sun." Since the mouth is on earth, it logically follows that the shaft itself must extend downward from this opening toward the center of the earth, where internal molten magma and perpetual fires burn with great heat "as in a great furnace." Certainly, no physical being could exist there, but demons who are spirit-beings can apparently survive this blistering environment.

> **"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"** (Re.9:3).

When Satan opened the bottomless pit, the smoke from its perpetual fires came out first, followed by the imprisoned demons themselves. Demons are invisible spirit-beings having no physical form. From John's unique vantage point, he envisioned those invisible creatures in a form that he and we can more easily relate to, which he then recorded for us here in this text. Accordingly, the demons are described as locusts, for the demons literally swarmed from the pit as do locusts from out of the ground.

The prophet Joel, one of the earliest writing prophets, used a local plague of locusts in his day (cf. Jl.1:2-12), which he referred to as a mighty nation in verse 6, which is applicable to this future period:

> ***"For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth*** *are* ***the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion:"*** (Jl. 1:6)

The "nation" Joel referred to in his prophecy well describes a supernatural nation of demons, as we discover here in Revelation 9:3, and this

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[249] Considering the fact that the location of the mouth of the bottomless pit is unknown, we assume that it must be camouflaged upon the earth's surface, possibly covered over by many centuries of heavy debris. It could also be hidden away within a great volcano, or it could even be hidden deep under water somewhere upon an ocean floor.

future period is the day of God's vengeance, commonly referred to in Scripture as the Day of the Lord.

Demons Sting and Torment Men Not Sealed by God

> **"[4]And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads. [5]And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment** *was* **as the torment of a scorpion, when it striketh a man"** (Re.9:4,5).

We know with certainty that John is using the word "locusts" in a metaphoric sense here and in verse 3 inasmuch as these "locusts" do not physically devour green vegetation as do actual locusts, but rather they attack mankind spiritually by injecting a spiritual venom into them, as does a scorpion with its chemical venom. All mankind that do not have the seal of God on their foreheads[250] will be totally defenseless against this great swarm of demons whom they had previously worshiped (cf. Jl. 2:1-11).

While the demons will not be allowed to directly kill fallen men and women, they will be permitted to control and wreck them spiritually, mentally, and physically. Their reprobate minds will be completely impaired by this spiritual venom to the extent that they become quite literally demented. Man's fallen mental faculty (i.e. his volition or will), will have become fully subjugated to the will of demons, who will then control their every thought and action.

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[250]We should take note here that these demons are not allowed to sting any who have been protected by the seal of God. This specifically refers to the Jewish remnant that has been sealed to continue on earth through this terrible Day of the Lord to witness of God and his Christ. There also may be an unknown number of redeemed Gentiles who had not received the mark of the Antichrist, and having accepted the witness of the Jewish remnant concerning Christ, they could also be immune to the poisonous venom of the demons.

Unlike the proceeding four trumpet judgments, we are given five months as the specific interval of time between the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpet. During that five-month period, the reprobate earth dwellers will be severely tormented by the swarming demons that God has permitted to indwell and control them.

> **"And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them"** (Re.9:6).

Both men and women will be suddenly and painfully attacked, and they must then suffer the terrible venomous aftermath of demon possession. They "shall desire to die" in order to put an end to their suffering, but "death shall flee from them." Both reprobate men and women must suffer this terrible mental agony without any hope that even death could relieve them of their pain. They cannot take their own lives, for they are restrained from doing so by the indwelling demons. Their mental agony does not mean that the insanity brought on by those demons will not cause men to inflict terrible physical pain upon themselves and others (cf. Mk.5:2–5), but through it all they will be kept alive, inasmuch as they are being prepared as pawns to serve as combatants within a great demonically-inspired war that is yet to come (cf. Re.9:16,17).

> **"[7]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. [8]And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as** *the teeth* **of lions"** (Re.9:7,8).

At this point in the text, demons and their human hosts are being viewed as one hybrid creature. We discover from John's description of them, that together they are in appearance like horses[251] with riders upon their backs (cf. Jl. 2:4), which are preparing to engage in battle. The

[251] The German name for locust is "hay horse," and in Italian it is "little horse," inasmuch as locusts have the general appearance of a horse when closely examined. This is particularly evident in the locust's head, which is shaped like that of a horse's head, and in its powerful legs that allow them to rapidly leap and bound forward.

head of a locust has a face that resembles the face of a man, long antenna that resembles a woman's hair, and sharp teeth that destroys every green plant it encounters. These demented hybrids have gold-colored areas on the top of their heads that look like the crowns worn by men and they have the faces of actual men, but with long flowing hair like that of women, and they have vicious teeth like that of a lion.

> **"[9]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. [10]And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power** *was* **to hurt men five months"** (Re. 9:9,10).

These demon-possessed horsemen also have a heavy substance across their breasts much like the iron breastplates worn by soldiers. This protection will render them nearly impervious to defeat in battle. As locusts, whose wings make a loud droning sound, these demon-possessed horsemen create a loud drumming noise like the "chariots of many horses" as they rush forward to engage in battle (cf. Jl. 2:5). Like scorpions, their venomous stings are in their tails[252] (i.e. in their wake). For, they have power to torment and traumatize men for five months, as they leave a trail of spiritual destruction behind them. (cf. Re.9:5).

The King of the Bottomless Pit

> **"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** (Re.9:11).

Common locusts have no leader, but spontaneously swarm out of the ground in wave after wave to satisfy their voracious hunger as they devour every green plant in their path. Much like common locusts, these

[252]Scorpions have a segmented tail that allows them to seek out and attack their prey in any direction thus making them particularly dangerous. Their sting is very painful although rarely deadly to humans.

demons are highly organized into what appears to be ranks like a vast army preparing to go forth in wave after wave.

Unlike common locusts, however, it is said that these demons have a king having the name, *Abaddon*, which when translated from the Hebrew means "destroying angel." *Apollyon* when translated from the Greek is "destroyer," a title commonly applied to Satan. Certainly Satan is the motivation behind all of these fallen angels that had earlier followed him in his rebellion against God,[253] but this angel of the deep abyss, who leads the demon army out of the pit, must be one of his subordinates or henchman, for Satan himself had not yet been imprisoned in the pit (cf. Re.9:2).

At this place in the text, the demonic army has been prepared and is now ready to engage in a horrifying battle quite unlike any before it.

> **"One woe is past; *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter"** (Re.9:12).

This warning by the flying angel of a coming second and third woe is extremely ominous considering the amount of pain already inflicted by the first woe, which had come forth following the blowing of the fifth trumpet.

The Sixth Trumpet Sounds: Four Angels Loosed from the River Euphrates

> **"[13]And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, [14]saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. [15]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"** (Re.9:13-15).

[253]cf. The Mystery of Iniquity, Addendum, page 569.

As the sixth trumpet sounds, the second woe is realized as four angels of destruction are loosed from the river Euphrates. The fact that those four angels had been previously bound indicates their evil nature and intent – they are in fact fallen angels of high rank who will lead the demon-possessed armies into battle. The river Euphrates is where Eden and Ur were earlier located on earth and is thus the very cradle of human civilization; this river has also served to separate the eastern and western worlds. The clash between those two worlds is now about to take place.

The fact that there are four demon commanders mentioned would indicate that the demonic armies are divided into four battalions, perhaps one targeting each major continent. We are told that the great destruction that will soon be perpetrated by these four demons and their armies of demon-possessed men will continue for "an hour, a day, and a month, and a year." Even so, the actual death toll will be limited to one third of mankind, such that two-thirds of the earth's population will in some manner avoid this incredible demonic onslaught.

200 Million Demon-possessed Men Wage War

> **"[16]And the number of the army of the horsemen** *were* **two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. [17]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"** (Re.9:16,17).

Here we discover that the preparation has been completed for a war that is about to be waged by demon-possessed men "riding" demonic "horses" who will kill or destroy everything that is in their path. The size of the combined armies is an incredible "two hundred thousand thousand" or 200 million demon-possessed men. John makes a point of saying that this exact number was given to him, so there can be no serious question about the size of this vast demonic army.

John closely observed the horses and their riders in the vision, and he proceeded to describe their strange appearance for us. The "horses" have what appeared to John as "heads of lions; but out of their mouths issued fire, smoke, and brimstone." From this description, they obviously are not of the common equine species, yet something metaphorically and functionally similar. The riders have breastplates of fiery red, the dull hazy blue of hyacinth, and the bright yellow of brimstone. To say that these horses and their riders are unusual is a vast understatement, for together they form a hybrid demonic creature that is part man and part demon.

One-third of the Earth's Population is Slain

> **"[18]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. [19]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"** (Re.9:18,19).

The third part of mankind will be killed by the fire, smoke, and brimstone that came out of their mouths. Some would equate the fire, smoke, and brimstone with artillery and flame throwers, chemical gas, and explosive projectiles and bombs, and they could also assume the employment of nuclear and laser weapons as well. Of course, this is all a matter of mere speculation; the fire, smoke, and brimstone is most probably something that far exceeds our faint perception of the spiritual nature of the weapons used in this demonic warfare.

Survivors Refuse to Repent

One would think that after having survived the great world war of the Antichrist, during which one-quarter of mankind had perished, as well as the great destruction caused by the first four trumpet judgments, and finally having lived through this terrifying time of demonic destruction associated with the sixth trumpet, wherein an additional one-third of the world's remaining population had perished, surviving men and

women would be more than ready to repent and submit to God, pleading for his mercy and deliverance. Yet, we see in this next verse that this is not so!

> **"[20]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: [21]Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts"** (Re.9:20,21).

Although the terrifying demonic war will have lasted for more than thirteen months, during which a third of the earth's population had perished, the greater number of people remaining upon the earth will refuse to repent of their paganism and moral depravity. They will continue to worship demons, while engaging in acts of sorcery through the use of drugs, potions, and incantations; and their immorality and acts of fornication will continue on unabated as before. They will amass and idolize material objects gained through theft and the evil works of their own hands – even as the seventh and last trumpet is about to sound bringing forth upon them the extremely grievous third woe that was earlier announced by the flying angel![254] ○

[254]cf. The Third Woe – The Seventh Trumpet Sounds page 262.

Revelation Chapter 10

As with the interval between the sixth and seven seals,[255] another interval appears here between the sixth and seventh trumpets. The text concerning the things and events within this interval begins to be revealed here in Revelation 10 verse 1 and extends through Chapter 11 verse 14.

Just as during the interval between the sixth and seventh seal, in which 144,000 Elect Jews of the nation of Israel were sealed on earth and the Church was "caught up" from the earth to appear in Heaven, we find that three very significant events are to take place within this interval as well.

First, John receives an overview of God's plans and purposes, which are contained within a small scroll that is given to him to mentally digest and record; then, John is directed to take the measure a spurious Third Temple standing in Jerusalem, which is marked for destruction; and finally, John sees two powerful witnesses, which God sends down to earth as a final warning of the ultimate judgment to come.

In Revelation 11:15, the seventh and last trumpet will sound as the third woe comes upon the earth, thus heralding God's final judgment upon a totally depraved and obstinately unrepentant mankind. This concluding judgment, consisting of seven bowls of God's wrath, will be more terrifying and even more deadly than all of the other judgments that had preceded it.

The Mighty Angel

We shall now begin our exposition of the text concerning this second interval, wherein John receives a small scroll from a 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:"** (Re.10:1)

[255]cf. The Interim Period between the Sixth and the Seventh Seal page 211.

This additional mighty angel (cf. Re. 5:2; 8:3) that John saw here emulates Christ in his general appearance in that he displays much of the glorified Christ's visible attributes (cf. Re.1:15,16). This angelic-being is adorned by a cloud, his face is as bright as the sun, there is a halo (i.e. rainbow) upon his head, and his feet are as pillars of burning brass. Nevertheless, this is not Jesus Christ, as is made quite evident by John's description of him as "another mighty angel." The word "another" is translated from the Greek word *allos* differentiating this angel only from other angels of similar kind. All angels are created beings, of which there are multitudes; whereas, Jesus Christ is their creator – a non-created eternal being having no equal outside of the divine Godhead.

The cloud that clothes this angel speaks of God's as yet unrevealed purposes and judgments, concerning which the Apostle Paul exclaimed:

> ***"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable*** *are* ***his judgments, and his ways past finding out"*** (Ro. 11:33)!

The rainbow speaks of this mighty angel's peaceful intent and purpose. After the destructive judgment of the great flood, God displayed the rainbow to Noah as a symbol of his peace, as well as his assurance that the earth would never again be destroyed by water (cf. Ge.9:12-16). We often view the rainbow today as a sign in the quiet peaceful period that follows a violent thunderstorm. The rainbow or halo (Greek *iris*) upon this angel's head speaks of the promise of peace that will ultimately follow God's severe judgments.[256] After the fiery destruction that had already taken place upon the earth, God sought to reassure John in this manner regarding the peace that was yet to come after the storm of God's final judgments have passed by.

The brilliant face of the angel emulates the full glory of the Godhead, in Christ's preeminence and omniscience, and his feet as pillars of fire

[256]The symbol of the rainbow has been stolen by today's LGBTQ+ movement as a symbol of their awful sinful diversity. In doing so, it amounts to a total repudiation of God's covenant of peace through lawful obedience, which He had made with man through Noah following the great flood (cf. Ge. 9:11-17).

demonstrate the necessity of judgment to come through Christ's omnipotence in tramping out all iniquity from his presence.

The Little Open Scroll

> **"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"** (Re.10:2).

Many expositors have erroneously interpreted this "book" as being the seven-sealed scroll that Jesus Christ had earlier received from the hand of his Father. However, it is evident that that scroll is now the firm and permanent possession of the Lord Jesus Christ – its rightful owner. Moreover, there still remains one unbroken seal on that scroll, such that it has not yet been fully opened. Whereas the seven-sealed "scroll" is translated from the Greek word *biblion*, this "little book" is translated from *bibliaridion*, which designates a small scroll that further differentiates it from the seven-sealed scroll. This small scroll held by the mighty angel is not sealed, but is in fact being held open in the hands of this mighty angel, as if he is eager to display its contents to John.

The fact that this angel can place one foot upon the land and the other upon the sea demonstrates his immense size as well as indicating the breadth of his power over the entire earth. In Chapter 9, we saw Satan and his demons turned loose to gain dominion over the earth, and in doing so they had brought forth mass destruction upon mankind as they willed; evil had seemingly overpowered good. To reassure John of Christ's ultimate control and power over the evil one, this mighty angel plants his feet, which are as pillars of fire, on both the earth and the sea to proclaim Christ's resolve to stamp out Satan and his demons, and to exercise his rightful authority to rule over the entire earth and all that is within its oceans and upon its continents.

> **"And [he] cried with a loud voice, as** *when* **a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices"** (Re.10:3)**.**

As we saw in Revelation 9, verses 20 and 21, rebellious mankind will utterly refuse to repent even after they have suffered through six extremely severe trumpet judgments – even as the last of the three woes the, seventh trumpet, yet hangs over them. When the mighty angel shouts out his angry disapproval of mankind's refusal to submit to Jesus Christ's rule over them, seven thundering voices out of Heaven appear to echo God's agreement with the mighty angel's angry roar with words of their own. Thunder often signals the imminency of God's righteous judgment, and here it portends God's seven final bowls of wrath, which are soon to be poured out upon the earth when the seventh trumpet sounds.

Voices of the Seven Thunders

> **"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"** (Re.10:4).

It is quite apparent that John had heard and understood the voices of the seven thunders, inasmuch as he was prepared to write down their very words. Although the book of the Revelation is not a sealed book, we find here that John was ordered by a voice out of Heaven not to write down the sayings of the seven thunders that he had heard. Apparently, they were intended for John's ears alone. Obediently, John did not write them down, and consequently they do not appear anywhere in our text. For that reason, it is impossible and inappropriate for us to comment on their precise content or meaning.

There are many things that God communicates in the privacy of his council within the Godhead that He does not want to reveal to all of mankind. The Apostle Paul spoke of one such instance he had experienced: "How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2Co.12:4). Paul had apparently overheard "unspeakable words" that were communicated within the Godhead that could not be lawfully translated into a language

spoken by mortal men. By this means, God sometimes reveals certain matters communicated within his internal council to one privileged individual to achieve his holy purpose, yet does not want it generally known to all men; for,

> **"*The secret* *things belong* *unto the LORD our God: but those* *things which are* *revealed* *belong* *unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law"*** (De.29:29).

Only those things openly revealed to man as a matter of divine law can be passed on to another that all may thereby obey them.

Time Allotted for Mankind's Repentance Ends

> **"[5]And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, [6]and sware 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"** (Re.10:5,6):

Again, this mighty angel is described as standing upon the earth and the sea. The angel swears by the eternal Creator of "Heaven, and the things that therein are," as well as the earth, and its sea. In so doing, he validates that what he is about to say is in full accord with God's divine will and creation. The phrase "there should be time no longer," is best interpreted to mean that there shall be no more time allotted to sinful mankind for his repentance and redemption; therefore, there is now no need of any further delay; God's final judgment can now take place as He wills.

> **"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"** (Re.10:7).

We note in this verse that the seventh angel will apparently blow his trumpet over a period of time, perhaps for several days or more, from the phrase "begin to sound." That is because this final trumpet signals the ultimate wrath of God, which is to be poured out upon the earth's inhabitants from seven shallow bowls.[257] Hence it would appear that the pouring out of each bowl will be punctuated by this seventh angel again blowing his trumpet.

The Mystery of God is Finished

As He had earlier revealed to his prophets, the mystery of God will be concluded – even as the seventh angel sounds his trumpet. In Holy Scripture, a mystery is something that God has kept hidden from mankind in previous ages, yet which He has preordained to be revealed within a future age. There are many such things that God had revealed to the prophets of old that had remained a secret to others, but which were later revealed to men within the New-Covenant era. Among those were the mystery concerning the Gospel of salvation by grace alone, the mystery surrounding the future redemption of Gentiles, and with all of that the enigma of a New-covenant Church – all of which has now been revealed to us in this present age.

Nevertheless, the greatest of all his mysteries is still hidden away within the mind of God. This is the ubiquitous "mystery of iniquity" (cf. 2Th. 2:7)[258] – an evil that mysteriously persists within God's universe in direct opposition to his sovereign will. Iniquity had its origin in Lucifer, the greatest of all the archangels, whom God had created to beautify His realm and to protect his possessions (cf. Ez. 28:14,15). Therefore, iniquity can only be eradicated by God's judgment of Lucifer (i.e. Satan), and along with him all of the fallen angels under his dominion. This judgment must also befall all of Adam's race who have become infused with Satan's iniquity and have thus become complicit in his rebellion.

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[257]cf. Seven Bowls Filled With God's Wrath, page 315.

[258]cf. Article The Mystery of Iniquity page 569 in the Addendum.

So far, God has withheld his final judgment of Satan, but when the seventh angel begins to sound his trumpet, this mystery will be resolved within seven bowls of God's wrath as the source of iniquity and God's evident tolerance of it is finished. This will ultimately come about as Satan along with all of the wicked beings, both angels and man, who had firmly held and practiced Satan's iniquity are forever banished from God's presence into a fearful lake of fire within an outer darkness – never to be seen nor heard from again (cf. page 389).

John Told to Consume the Little Book

> **"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"** (Re.10:8).

John is again commanded by the great voice out of Heaven, which has been guiding him all along. This time, the great voice directs him to approach the mighty angel, and to take the little scroll from his hand.

> **"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"** (Re.10:9).

When John approached this mighty angel, he asked him to give him the little scroll. While giving the scroll to John, the angel tells him that he should take it and "eat it up." This seems a strange command inasmuch as one does not ordinarily eat a book. The Greek word translated "eat it up" here is *katesthiō* in the Greek, which can be translated as "consume" or "devour" – either literally or figuratively (cf. Je.15:16; Ez. 3:1-3). It is thus apparent that the angel is telling John not to just quickly read through it, but to consume and memorize the contents of the little scroll. In keeping with this symbolism, the angel then tells John that although it will at first be very sweet for him to taste of its contents, as he takes time to digest it, it will become quite bitter for him to contemplate.

The Bitter-Sweet Knowledge of God's Activities

> **"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"** (Re.10:10).

As he was commanded, John took the scroll from the angel's hand and metaphorically "ate it up." It was not at all bitter; indeed, it was sweet to ingest the contents of this little scroll, because through it God was sharing eternal matters with him that were wondrous indeed. Nevertheless, once the contents were fully known and contemplated, that digested knowledge caused John to anguish over its ultimate ramifications – it had become emotionally bitter to his stomach.

We can understand what John is saying here to some extent. From the very beginning of our study of the Revelation, it has been sweet to read and joyously examine its contents that we may better know Jesus Christ in his eternal glorified state, as well as understand his plans for the glorious future of a redeemed mankind. However, when we discovered in greater detail what terrible things must come to pass upon the earth as God necessarily judges the reprobate without mercy, we greatly sorrow and anguish over their terrible suffering and what must be their ultimate destiny.

John does not reveal the contents of this scroll to us here, but we shall gain some sense of its contents when we study an unusual vision that John will reveal to us in Revelation Chapter 12.

John's Future Ability to Prophesy

> **"And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings"** (Re.10:11).

Although John surely expected this prophetic document to be delivered to the Church in some manner, he had no assurance that he would live to deliver it in person. In this verse, the mighty angel appears to as-

sure John that he will live to prophesy again before "many peoples, language groups, nations, and kings."

The literal sense of this verse is that John would one day be freed from his captivity on the island of Patmos to personally deliver the document and to extensively prophesy concerning its contents. It is commonly believed that the Emperor Nerva, the successor to the Roman emperor Domitian, had freed John from his imprisonment on Patmos and had returned him to Ephesus near the end of the first century AD – thus literally fulfilling this angel's pronouncement.

Nevertheless, we have no record of John having appeared in person thereafter before "many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." For that reason, other expositors assume that John had died on Patmos soon after having completed the Revelation document. If so, we have no record of the means by which the document found its way back to Ephesus and the other six churches – perhaps it was found by one of his followers along side his body.

Therefore, this verse could refer to John's future resurrection, along with the other Apostles, to witness before multitudes during the future Millennial age.[259] Be all that as it may, this prophecy has been preserved within the Holy Scriptures, which have been handed down through the ages to this very day – thus providing John's testimony worldwide to peoples of every nation, language, and station of life. ○

[259]cf. Mt.19:28; The Millennial Age, page 381.

Revelation Chapter 11

As we continue on into Revelation Chapter 11, we still find ourselves within the interval of time between the sounding of the sixth and the seventh trumpets, as was described in our introduction to Chapter 10 on page 244. As we mentioned in our earlier introduction to the Revelation on page 95, and have already discovered in this Commentary, the Revelation is decidedly Jewish in its imagery throughout; this fact is no more in evidence than it is within this chapter.

John Directed to Measure the Temple

> **"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"** (Re.11:1).

Measuring-reeds were commonly used to determine longer physical lengths based upon a shorter cubit (about 18-21 inches), which was the common standard of length in that day. The reed was cut from the rod of a reed-like plant (Greek, *kalamos*) that often grew to be as much as 20 feet high. The measuring rod was taken from the hollow stem of this plant, thus rendering it lightweight, while its strong outer surface made it rigid and resistant to excessive bending.

We should note, however, that this reed's length is not specified here, nor are any physical dimensions actually given for this Temple. The additional fact that John was told by the angel to measure "them that worship therein" as well as the Temple and the altar, indicates that something other than a mere measurement of a physical structure was to take place.

God often "measures" or "maps out" that which He intends to protect; or conversely, that which He intends to destroy because of its nonconformance to his will. This reed that John was given to measure the

temple was "like unto a rod,"[260] in the sense that the "measurements" that John took mapped out people and things associated with the Temple that were destined to recieve God's judgment.

The practice of the sacrificial aspect of the ceremonial law through the Levitical priesthood was a primary purpose for which Solomon's first Temple was constructed. The Temple that John measures here in Chapter 1 is apparently a future Third Temple[261] that the Jews of that day will have erroneously built in Jerusalem[262] just prior to, or at the very beginning of the earthly reign of the Political Antichrist. Hence, the Antichrist must have permitted its construction; or perhaps, he will have merely put his stamp of approval upon its existence to deceive the Jews concerning his malicious intent.

This "Third Temple" of the last days is definitely not in conformance with God's will, for with the destruction of Herod's Temple in AD 70, God had put a permanent end to the old sacrificial system that had necessitated the presence of an earthly Temple. The ultimate sacrifice of the true Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, upon the cross some forty years before had fully resolved man's sin problem once for all (cf. He.10:10) through the shedding of his precious blood. Therefore, any effort made to return to the practice of animal sacrifice would be tantamount to a blasphemous rejection of God's sacrificial gift of the priceless Son of his very being.

> **"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"** (Re.11:2).

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[260]The word translated "rod" is *rhabdo* in the Greek which can refer to a cane, a sceptre, or staff.

[261]This future temple is commonly referred to as the "Third Temple," inasmuch as Zerubbabel's Temple was not razed until Herod the Great radically expanded and renovated it as the second Temple.

[262]cf. Addendum Article: Third Temple of the Last Days, page 516.

The court outside the Third Temple was not to be "measured" by John. Here God is making a sharp distinction between the Jewish worshipers inside the Temple and the Gentiles without. The ancient historian Flavius Josephus[263] wrote that there was a wall within the outer court of Herod's temple, which was breast high and having regular columns with lettering upon them in Greek and Latin warning that non-Jews were forbidden to approach any nearer the Temple proper under penalty of death. Gentiles were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (cf. Ep.2:12): That "middle wall" of separation between Jew and Gentile was broken down by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, wherein both Jew and Gentile are made as one in Him (cf. Ep.2:14). Nevertheless, the Jews living in that future day will not yet have accepted Jesus as their Messiah and Lord when they build this Third Temple.

Here we find that Gentiles are being specifically excluded from judgment, since they were not to be measured by John. He is informed by the angel that the Gentiles will have been allotted another forty-two months to dominate and trample down the streets of Jerusalem – after which time none will remain within the city. This 3 ½ years of Gentile occupation of the city encompasses the last half of Daniels seventieth week, at the end of which the "times of the Gentiles" will have come to an end (cf. Page 360).

It is only the apostate Jews who are engaging in temple worship through the now blasphemous sacrificial system, which have been specifically marked out by God for judgment at this time. Should they not repent and accept the perfect atonement offered by Christ, their Messiah, they must be blotted out along with the ultimate destruction of their false Third Temple.[264]

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[263]Flavius Josephus (AD 37 – ca. 100) was a Jewish historian who wrote of the first Jewish–Roman War. He had defected to the Roman side where he served as a translator, thus enabling him to accurately record the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

[264]cf. Destruction of the Third Temple, page 523.

God's Sends Two Witnesses to Israel

For that reason, God will send forth two powerful witnesses to warn Israel of her shameful intent, and to inform them of the Truth that Jesus, whom they had vehemently rejected, was and is their true Messiah and that their Third Temple is therefore illegitimate.

> **"[3]And I will give** *power* **unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred** *and* **threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. [4]These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth"** (Re.11:3,4).

These two witnesses, appropriately clothed in sackcloth for Israel's shameful intent, will be sent by God to witness to Israel during the second half of Daniel's seventieth week (i.e. 1260 days). The two olive trees represent their association with Israel, and the two candlesticks represent their true witness in association with the Holy Spirit. Together these two witnesses stand against Satan, who has declared himself to be the "god of the earth."[265]

Identity of the two witnesses

The two witnesses are not identified by name in the inspired text, thus leaving us to speculate concerning who they may be. They could in fact be men whom the Scriptures have never before recorded. Nevertheless, there are certain implications found elsewhere in the Scriptures that would seen to allude to their identity, which we shall now briefly explore.

> ***"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD"*** (Mal.4:5).

[265]The word for "god" found here in the AKJV is *theos* in the Greek, where it is being used to figuratively symbolize Satan and his Antichrist, who during that period is as yet the ruling "lord" over the earth (cf. text of the *ESV* and *NASB* translations).

From this Old-Testament text, we reasonably conclude that one of the two witnesses appearing here, just before the Day of the Lord begins, will most likely be Elijah the Tishbite of upper Galilee. In verse 6 below we read that together the two witnesses "have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy." This could elude to Elijah's power as a prophet of God to stop the rain from falling upon the earth as he did in the days of King Ahab (cf. 1Ki.17:1).

There is much less certainty concerning the identity of the second witness. Some say the second witness will be John the Baptist, whose person represented a type of Elijah at Jesus' first advent. Some say that he will be Enoch of whom it is said that he walked with God (cf. Ge. 5:24). Others say he will be Elisha, or perhaps one of the other Old-Testament prophets.

The olive tree is highly symbolic of Israel, thus implying that both men are identified with the nation of Israel. Here, we assert, along with many others, that he will most probably be Moses, who along with Elijah had earlier conferred with Jesus on the mount of his transfiguration (cf. Mk. 9:4). Again we read in verse 6 below that together the two witnesses "have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." This characterized similar powers that God had given to Moses as he stood against the Pharaoh of Egypt (cf. Exodus Chapters 7-12).

Moses will bring into remembrance the statutes and judgments of the Old-covenant Law (cf. Mal. 4:4). while Elijah represents the Old-covenant prophets through whom God spoke to Israel. It takes two or more witnesses to verify any truth (cf. Mt.18:16); thus God will provide these two witnesses to Israel to verify that both the Law and the Prophets certify that Jesus Christ had been sent to them from God as their Messiah (cf Lu.24:44).

Their comparison to two candlesticks, which are seen as being fueled by oil from the two olive trees, implies that the light and truth of their witness is coming through the Holy Spirit. They will witness to the Jewish population of Israel by preaching the Gospel of the coming Kingdom age, thus signifying to them that Jesus is their long-awaited

Messiah and King. Those who accept their witness, repent, and believe in Jesus, their Messiah, will receive the seal of God before the great Day of the Lord begins in severe Judgment (cf. Re. 7:2-8; page 212).

> **"[5]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. [6]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"** (Re.11:5,6).

The depraved Gentiles on earth in that day will seek to destroy the two messengers. Nevertheless, any attempt to kill them will be met by an all-consuming fire issuing out from their mouths that will immediately incinerate all their attackers. This is likely a literal fire spoken of here, but whether it will directly come out of their mouths, or materialize before them at their spoken command is subject to interpretation.

Although their primary witness is to Israel, the two witnesses will sternly warn the entire world of the terrifying judgments that are close at hand through various illustrative miracles indicative of the judgments issued by previous Old-Testament prophets: They will exercise the power given them to create droughts over the earth's surface, turn bodies of water into blood, and send forth various plagues upon the earth as a preview of the terrible judgments of God that are to come. In this manner, they will continue to boldly witness unimpeded throughout the remaining three and one-half years of Daniel's seventieth week.

Witnesses Slain by the Beast from the Bottomless Pit.

> **"[7]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. [8]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 (Re.11:7,8).

As Daniel's seventieth week is rapidly coming to a close, the "beast" (Greek, *thēr rion*, a dangerous creature) who has ascended out of the bottomless pit will attack and overcome the two witnesses. Many associate this "beast" with the Antichrist's false prophet, who is later described as a beast coming out of the earth (cf. Re. 13:11). However, considering the context given here, he is most likely *Apollyon*, the king of the imprisoned demons, who had ascended from the bottomless pit when Satan had previously opened it (cf. Re.9:1,2;11).

This demonic beast will successfully wage war against the two witnesses to overcome and kill them. Whereas no mortal man could withstand them, Satan will succeed in killing the two witnesses by enlisting the power of the underworld. Satan's demons, who had long survived the perpetual fires of the bottomless pit, could not be deterred by fire that came from the mouths of the two witnesses.

The great city spiritually referred to in this text as "Sodom and Egypt" is clearly Jerusalem: "where our Lord was crucified." By this time, Jerusalem will have become the seat of the Antichrist, and it will be awash with the basest forms of immorality and idolatry on a par with that found earlier in ancient Sodom. The demonic worship by the godless of that day will in like manner resemble the demonic polytheism once practiced in ancient Egypt.

The world Celebrates the Death of God's Witnesses

The bodies of the two witnesses will be laid out in the street of Jerusalem for three and one-half days without burial – a terrible indignity both to intimidate the remaining orthodox Jewish inhabitants of the city and to "shake their fists" at God who had sent the witnesses.

> **"[9]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. [10]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" (Re.11:9,10).

The depraved peoples on earth will fear burying the two witnesses out of their sight because after three days following our Lord's crucifixion, He had arose from the sealed tomb in which his body had been placed. They wrongly presume from ancient tradition that a resurrection of the two witnesses can not take place if they closely observe their dead bodies for more than three days over which time irreversible corruption will have set in.

During those three and one-half days, we are told of the grotesque celebration of all the inhabitants of the earth upon hearing of the death of the two witnesses. The entire world will gloat over their dead bodies, gleefully observing them for more than "three days and three nights" to assure themselves that they are truly dead and will remain so.[266]

After the three days and nights have past, the peoples of earth will rejoice because they believe that they have permanently cut off the source of God's wrath that they have been suffering. Of course, they have only killed the messengers because they did not like their harsh message; it will not deter God's ultimate judgment that must soon follow.

In a mocking parody of what is very much akin to the present-day secularized Christmas celebration, they will send each other gifts and make merry. Much as many today ignorantly make the annual celebration of the birth of Christ into a drunken orgy and in so doing greatly dishonor Him, the partying will be even more sinfully blatant at that time. It will be an "in-your-face" celebration intended to defy and dishonor God; inasmuch as they having killed the means by which God had been delivering his harsh warnings concerning judgments to come, they believe they can also avoid suffering the harsh judgments their warnings had portended.

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[266] Perhaps their observation by the entire world means that their dead bodies will be observed through television, or perhaps through some far more advanced future media.

God Recalls His Two Witnesses

> **"[11]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. [12]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"** (Re.11:11,12).

After three and one-half days, God will breathe life back into the two witnesses and they will began to stir. Soon thereafter, they will stand upon their feet. Terror will immediately fall upon all who had gleefully watched them in death, because now they fear what those two resurrected men could do in retaliation. However, God called down for them to return to Heaven; for the work, for which they had been sent to earth, had been accomplished. The two witnesses' final warning to a sinful world will take place before the eyes of their enemies, as they ascend back into Heaven within clouds of glory.

With the withdrawal of his two witnesses, God will have finished pleading with reprobate mankind to repent; death and eternal judgment before the Great White Throne is now all that remains for 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"** (Re.11:13).

This great earthquake will slay seven-thousand men in Jerusalem as a consequence of a tenth part of the city being destroyed. It is most likely that the Third Temple will also fall into rubble within this great earthquake. A great fear will come over the faithful Jewish remnant remaining in Jerusalem, who had not participated in this blasphemous farce, and they will give glory to God for his swift and decisive action.

The Third Woe – The Seventh Trumpet Sounds

> **"[14]The second woe is past; *and,* behold, the third woe cometh quickly. [15]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"** (Re: 11:14, 15).

At last, the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, and along with it the third and last woe announced earlier by the flying angel will very suddenly come to pass.[267] This seventh and last trumpet marks the beginning of the closing judgments following the great and fearful Day of the Lord, during which time God will no longer be pleading with men to repent. For, even as this last trumpet sounds, the "kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our God, and of his Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."

Rejoicing that Christ has Exercised his Power to Reign

The rejoicing in Heaven is seen here as being immediate, for the coming Kingdom Age of Christ ruling on earth is now imminent.

> **"[16]And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, [17]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"** (Re.11:16,17).

In Heaven, John saw the twenty-four elders, which he had earlier observed seated before the throne of God, fall upon their faces and worship God, because his Christ, "which art, and wast, and art to come," had exercised his great sovereign power to reign upon the earth.

> **"And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged,**

[267]cf. Three Woes Define the Judgments to Come, page 231.

> **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"** (Re.11:18).

The twenty-four elders are looking forward to four decisive actions, which they know that the Lord God will soon undertake in this final hour: First, God will pour his wrath full-strength upon the angry nations that had long thwarted his efforts to redeem mankind through the sacrifice of his Son (cf. Ps.2:1-6). Secondly, God's servants, prophets, and saints, as well as all who have reverenced his Name, will be rewarded by God for their faithfulness (cf. Is. 25:1). Third, the reprobate dead will be raised and judged before the Great White Throne to determine their eternal destiny in the lake of fire (cf. Re.20:11-15). Forth, God will utterly destroy all of those whose sinful activities had brought forth destruction upon God's perfect and beautiful earth (cf. Ge.1:31).

God's Temple in Heaven is Opened

> **"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"** (Re.11:19).

In contrast to the Third Temple, which apostate Jews had erroneously built at the beginning of this chapter, we discover that God has a Temple in Heaven that was not constructed with the hands of men. This Temple had provided the "blueprint" after which the Tabernacle and later the First Temple on earth had been constructed. This Heavenly Temple has been kept closed, its contents hidden away; but now as the end of the age nears, it is opened for John to view.

The Ark of the Covenant is Revealed

Amazingly, the Ark of the Covenant is seen standing in this majestic Heavenly Temple. The Ark was once the central and most sacred object

in all of Judaism, and it had once stood hidden out of view within the Holy of Holies of an earthly Temple. It is mentioned more than 200 times in the Old Testament, but after Jeremiah 3:16 it is not mentioned again except for one historic reference to it in Hebrews 9:4. Finally, it is mentioned here in Revelation 11:19 as existing within the Temple of God in Heaven. While it could be assumed that the Ark in Heaven was the prototype after which the earthly Ark was constructed, Scripture would appear to indicate otherwise:

The Ark of the Covenant had mysteriously disappeared from the earth around 700 BC soon after the reign of King Hezekiah – most likely during the reign of his wicked son, Manasseh (cf. 2Chr. 33:1,2). This occurred as the *Shekinah* glory of God had also left the Temple. Ezekiel tells of the hesitant withdrawal of God's Glory along with the Arc in chapter 10 of his prophecy, as the two cherubim guarding the arc winged it away (cf. Ez. 10:1-22).[268] The cherubim first hovered over the threshold of the Temple, then over the eastern gate, and then briefly hovered aloft over the city of Jerusalem before finally ascending Heavenward. The two cherubim carried the Arc along with them, apparently placing it in its rightful place within the Heavenly Temple, as we view it here in Revelation 11:19.

Therefore, Herod's Temple could not possibly have had the original Ark standing within it. It has been commonly supposed that there was but a low platform in the Holy of Holies, which had been prepared to receive the Ark should it be found. If so, when the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies each year on the Day of Atonement, there would have been no mercy seat on which to sprinkle the blood offering for the people. Therefore, it is indeed likely that Herod, in an act of extreme arrogance, had placed an empty replica of the original Ark upon the platform.

Speculation abounds concerning what had happened to this replica of the Ark assumed to have been standing on the platform in Herod's Temple, and many theories have been put forth. One premise put forth

[268] These cherubim were physically represented by two engraved images hovering over the Mercy Seat of the Ark.

by Robert Cornuke, a noted biblical investigator and explorer,[269] is that the Temple priests had removed it from the Temple to keep it safe; whereupon it had traveled through Carthage and then Byzantium, such that over time it had come to rest in a small but heavily fortified chapel in Axum, Ethiopia – where it supposedly remains today. Nevertheless, no one has been allowed to thoroughly examine this artifact to verify its authenticity, or even to look upon it to determine its existence.

Without proper protection from the elements, the replica Ark of Herod's Temple, would have long ago crumbled away into dust. This has led to a modern-day theory, as a consequence of more recent excavations, which assumes that a vault had been constructed directly below the Holy of Holies, and that the Ark of Herod's Temple had been lowered into it, and its opening sealed over by Temple priests just before the Roman army entered the Temple in AD 70. It is further assumed that this Ark still remains sealed up within that vault where it has been protected from deterioration by massive stone walls.

Nevertheless, all of this intense speculation is irrelevant because any reasonable interpretation of Revelation 11:19 requires us to accept the fact that God Himself had removed the original Ark of the Covenant as his *Shekinah* glory had departed from the Temple on earth; and that God has kept it safely preserved out of sight within this majestic Temple in Heaven, as it was revealed to John within this vision.

Moving on, we also read in verse 19 that there were lightnings, voices, and thunderings coming from the Heavenly Temple. This would indicate that God is preparing to undertake very forceful and decisive actions. The earthquake and hail that simultaneously takes place upon the earth is a solemn warning to a reprobate mankind that God is about to send forth his ultimate judgments. ○

[269] cf. *Temple*, written by Robert Cornuke, *Koinonia House*, Chapter 15, page 161.

Revelation Chapter 12

Prior to this chapter, the text of the Revelation has been a straightforward chronological narrative wherein one event has directly followed after the next. However, we find as we begin this chapter that a sharp break in that linear narrative has occurred. Chapter 12 actually marks the beginning of a secondary narrative, which is essentially a chronological "fold-back" in time to a period just prior to the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week.[270]

Thus, we discover that Chapter 12 essentially parallels Chapters 4 and 5 of the primary narrative wherein we saw God as the absolute Sovereign Ruler upon his Heavenly throne, attended by four majestic creatures and twenty-four elders. We also saw that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, had received a scroll from his Father's hand, which is essentially the title deed to the earth and all that is upon it. With the authority that is found written in that scroll, God plans to establish a Kingdom age upon the earth with Jesus Christ as its reigning King.

In complete contrast, the text of Chapter 12 provides us with a sweeping view of Satan, who is acting in determined opposition to God's divine right to rule over the earth through his Christ. Although Satan was referred to in Chapters 2 and 3 in connection with the seven churches (cf. Re. 2:9,13,24; 3:9), and he was clearly understood to be working behind the scenes in the rise of the Antichrist to power in Chapter 6 verse 2, this is the first time in the Revelation that we directly observe him in his active role as the determined adversary of God, and the source and promoter of his iniquity.

It is highly probable that the content of this chapter corresponds in some way to the text written within the little scroll that John had received from the mighty angel in Revelation Chapter 10. John had not revealed the text contained within that scroll, but had only said that it had seemed sweet to his taste as he read it, but that it had quickly

[270] cf. Chronology of the Revelation, page 426 and Illustration 5, page 433.

soured in his stomach when he considered all its ramifications. John apparently reveals much of its bitter-sweet content within this chapter.

As we begin our exposition of the text of Chapter 12, we must acknowledge that the chapter break, found here in our Bible, was provided only to aid us in navigating through the text of the document, and that no such break occurs in the Greek text. John often used words such as "after this" to indicate that he is moving on to another topic, but Revelation 12 begins with the conjunctive "and," thus directly linking it to the text concerning the Temple and the Ark of the Covenant in Heaven, which we discussed in some detail in our exposition of the last verse of Chapter 11. Hence, the Jewish symbolism, which we have already encountered throughout this document, will be greatly intensified within this chapter along with John's extensive use of metaphors and symbolization.

The Sign of a Woman in Heaven

"[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: [2]And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered" (Re.12:1,2).

Immediately after the Heavenly Temple was opened in Heaven, and the Ark of the Covenant was seen standing safely within it, John saw this "great wonder" in Heaven. The word "wonder" found here is *semeion* in the Greek, which can also be understood as a miraculous "sign." Therefore, John is telling us that he is referring to a metaphorical woman who is actually a "sign" representing something else, yet something that is analogous to a woman.

If we completely ignore the obvious Jewish context surrounding this verse, we could immediately jump to false conclusions. For instance, many interpreters have emphatically stated that this "woman" represents the Church of all ages who "delivers" Christ to the world. The Church is referred to as the "bride of Christ" in Scripture and is never at any time referred to as his "mother;" for the Church had not begotten Him.

Rather, the Church is Jesus' new creation delivered into the world from his riven side – much as was Eve from the side of Adam.

Not surprisingly, the *Roman Catholic Church* refers to this "woman" as the virgin Mary, whom they have falsely deified to the extent that she is seen by them as an exclusive gateway to Christ, thus usurping his role as the sole intercessor between God and man (cf. 1Ti.2:5). In addition, various cults have been founded by women who have falsely claimed that this "woman" is a symbolic representation of themselves.

The attributes defining this "woman" are the sun, moon, and stars. This along with the Jewish context provided in verse 19 of the previous chapter clearly identifies her as Israel. This is readily verified by comparing the woman's attributes with those found in an earlier dream of Jacob's son, Joseph:

> ***"[9]And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. [10]And he told*** *it* ***to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What*** *is* ***this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth"*** (Ge.37:9,10)?

Jacob had no difficulty identifying those metaphors with his own family: In Joseph's dream, Jacob was symbolically compared to the sun, the moon symbolized his wife, Leah,[271] and the twelve stars symbolized Joseph and his eleven brothers – who would later bow down before him in Egypt (cf. Ge. 42:6). Those twelve brothers would ultimately constitute the twelve tribes of Israel.

The word "woman" in verse 1 is *gune* in the Greek, which specifically refers to a "wife." It should be noted that Israel was metaphorically referred to as the wife of God in the Old Testament book of Isaiah (cf.

[271]Joseph and Benjamin were the sons of Abraham's second wife, Rachel, who had died giving birth to Benjamin (cf. Ge. 35:16-19), whereas the other ten brothers were the sons of Leah, who had wickedly sold Joseph into bondage in Egypt. (cf. Ge. 37:26-28).

Is. 54:5,6) and even as a wayward wife in the prophecy of Hosea (cf. Ho. 2:2). This metaphor of the woman as a wife is also in keeping with the context of verse 2 of our current text which tells us that this "woman" is "with child" and is about to deliver that child into the world. Therefore, the "woman" in this verse is not a literal woman, but a "sign" representing Israel who "gave birth" upon the earth to Jesus, the Christ – after having travailed through many painful periods of tribulation like unto the pains of childbirth, which had culminated in the painful Roman oppression that Israel had suffered at the time of Jesus' birth.

The Sign of a Great Red Dragon in Heaven

> **"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"** (Re.12:3).

Next, John saw a second wondrous sign in Heaven – a great red dragon. The "red dragon" metaphorically represents Satan, as is clearly stated later on in verse 9 of this chapter. Satan is not an actual dragon any more than Israel is a literal woman, but this sign metaphorically represents him. The English word dragon is *drakōn* in the Greek, which being interpreted is a "fascinating[272] serpent."[273] Red comes from *purrhos* meaning "flame colored." His red color indicates his fiery nature, such that he had become a liar and murderer from the very beginning (cf. Jn. 8:44).

Satan, the great dragon, has seven heads upon which are seven crowns, the first six historically representing his earlier failed attempts to rule over the earth through six human men, which were: Pharaoh of Egypt, Shalmaneser of Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Darius of

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[272]Satan (i.e. Lucifer) is a beautiful creature that fallen men find very fascinating. By this means, he easily seduces and captures reprobate men to aid him in is iniquitous rebellion against God.

[273]"Dragon" as it is found in the Hebrew Old Testament is translated from *tanniyn* that describes a sea monster (i.e. a serpent or whale) or a land monster (i.e. a wild canine or jackal).

Media-Persia, Alexander of Greece, and Caesar Augustus of Rome. The "horns" represent their military might.

Prophetically interpreted, his seventh head represents Satan's future and final attempt to rule over the earth through his Antichrist.[274] The seven heads, wearing seven crowns, represent the rulers of seven nations whose ten armies (i.e. horns) Satan will commandeer to exercise political control over the earth through his future Antichrist, about whom we shall read about in some detail within Chapter 13.

> **"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 (Re. 12:4).**

Satan, a spiritual being, does not have a physical tail;[275] this text means that he drew a third of the stars down in his train (i.e. in his "caravan" or "wake") along with him as he was cast down to the earth. The "stars (Greek, *aster;* i.e. "bright ones") of Heaven" in this verse refer to the angels, whom Satan had corrupted in his prideful rebellion against God (cf. Job. 38:7). Therefore, Satan and one third of the angels of Heaven, who had been subservient to him, were cast out of Heaven and down to the earth, where they later continued to oppose God by perverting men to aid them in their iniquitous rebellion.

Satan had succeeded in corrupting Adam through Eve (Ge. 3:1-6.), and he had early on sought to destroy the line of Seth through which the Messiah would come. His efforts did not stop there, as Old-Testament Scripture clearly substantiates (cf. Ge. 6:1,2.). His nefarious efforts con-

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[274]It should be noted that Egypt and Assyria fell short of attaining full world dominance. Moreover, we should note that all of those rulers suffered from megalomania, self-delusion, paranoia, and hysteria. This disorder will likewise characterize the future Antichrist, thus rendering him a viable human agent for Satan to indwell and control.

[275]Satan is often misrepresented by the treacherous and wanton mythological Greek god Pan who was often depicted as having a forked tail.

tinued as he actively sought to destroy Jesus both during, and after his incarnation.

> "**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" (Re.12:5).**

We read in the Gospel according to Luke that the angel Gabriel had said to Mary,

> ***"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS"*** (Lu.1:31).

Through Mary, Israel brought forth the "man child" who was destined to rule the nations of the world "with a rod of iron." Isaiah had earlier prophesied concerning Him saying,

> ***"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"*** (Is.9:6).[276]

When after many attempts, Satan could not prevent Jesus' birth, he stood ready to destroy the "man child" (i.e. the Messiah) as soon as He was delivered. He had at first enlisted Herod, who through political jealousy sought to find the child and have Him killed lest he run the risk of losing his crown to Him. Failing to locate Him, Herod ordered that all of the male children in the region around Bethlehem under two years of age be killed by the sword. However, the child he sought to kill was not one of those that was slaughtered; for Joseph had been warned by God of Herod's evil intent, and had taken Mary and Jesus down into Egypt – where they resided until the death of Herod (cf. Mt. 2:13-15).

Throughout Jesus' ministry, Satan plotted to divert Him from his mission or to have Him killed before He could accomplish his act of redemption in the specific way of the cross that had been preordained by

[276]In proper context, "us" in this verse specifically pertains to Israel, not to Christians or the world at large.

God the Father. At the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, Satan had sought to tempt Jesus' human nature to commit sin within the wilderness; but in that effort, he had utterly failed (cf. Mt.4:1-11). After that, Satan enlisted the pride of Israel's religious rulers to oppose Him, and lastly he entered into Judas Iscariot to betray Him to his executioners (cf. Mt. 26:14-16; 47-49).

Nevertheless, Jesus' crucifixion was not the victory that Satan had sought; for on the third day, Jesus rose bodily from the dead bringing many redeemed sons to glory within his own procession into Heaven. Jesus "was caught up unto God, and to his throne;" and Israel, having first rejected their Messiah and then having demanded his death, was left desolate of God's holy presence and had thus become vulnerable to Satan's deception and continued afflictions.

God Prepares a Place of Safety for Israel

> **"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"** (Re.12:6).

In this verse, John records that God has prepared a place of safety for Israel within a vast wilderness. This could be seen as the current dispersion of Jews into various Gentile nations. As we know, however, the current dispersion of Jews into Gentile nations has already lasted much longer than "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (i.e. 3 ½ years), and the scattered remnant from that first exodus has been more often than not heavily persecuted rather than nourished.

Therefore, this ultimate place of safety has not yet been realized. We shall discover the significance of that place that God has prepared for Israel later on in verse 13 of this chapter, as it speaks of a mass exodus of Jews out of Israel that will take place in the future.[277]

[277] cf. Israel Flees to Her Place of Safety on page 275.

Satan Loses a Great War in Heaven

> **"[7]And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, [8]and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven [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"** (Re.12:7-9).

This verse speaks of a great war that was waged in Heaven by the archangel Michael and his angelic legions, against Lucifer (i.e. Satan)[278] who was joined in the battle by his fallen angels (i.e. his demons). Satan, again referred to here in this verse as a "great dragon" and that "old serpent," and the "Devil," could not prevail against the archangel Michael and his Heavenly hosts who had essentially outnumbered his evil forces two-to-one (cf. Re.12:4). John observes that Satan ultimately lost this great war, after which he and his demons were expelled from Heaven and cast down to a desolate uninhabited earth.[279]

The specific reason for this celestial war and the expulsion of Lucifer (i.e. Satan) from Heaven is a complex issue involving iniquity, which God had discovered in his beautiful archangel Lucifer. How Lucifer, whom God had created perfect in all his ways, had become infected with iniquity is indeed a mystery. We have discussed this enigma further in our Article entitled The Mystery of Iniquity on page 569 of the Addendum.

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[278]After iniquity was found in him, Lucifer is thereafter referred to as Satan, the evil opponent and adversary of God, the arch enemy of all that is good, and the accuser of all men that love and serve God.

[279] It must be assumed that the earth was yet "without form and empty" (cf. Ge.1:2) at the time of Lucifer's fall and his incarceration upon it, inasmuch as his fall apparently occurred before God began to carve out a place upon the earth as a home for Adam and his many descendants (cf. Ge. 1:3-27).

Heaven Rejoices over Satan's Expulsion

> **"[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. [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"** (Re.12:10,11).

John heard a loud voice out of Heaven saying, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." As the great war in Heaven came to an end, Satan and his demons had been expelled from Heaven and were cast down onto a primitive barren earth (cf. Ge.1:2). Although a great number of his demons had been sealed within a bottomless pit deep within the earth,[280] Satan and various "less egregious" demons were apparently left free to roam the surface of the earth conditioned upon their conduct.

Moreover, Satan was periodically required to appear before God to explain his current activities as a requirement of his liberty to roam about upon the earth. As we discover in the book of Job, Satan often took advantage of that opportunity to accuse God's Elect of their sin in an effort to defend his own iniquitous activities (cf. Job 1:7-11).

When the resurrected Christ ascended to the throne room of God, Satan had been fully defeated and was therefore permanently expunged from Heaven. In his place, Christ stood triumphant. Thereupon, there arose a great exultation in Heaven by the brethren of those whom Satan had cursed and slandered before God day and night. By faith, they had stood firm against Satan and his accusations and had prevailed. They had overcome the evil one by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. They had not loved their own earthly lives; but by faith, many had willingly submitted themselves to suffer a martyr's death for the future rewards of Heaven (cf. He.11:1-13).

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[280] cf. Satan Opens the Bottomless Pit , page 235.

> **"Therefore rejoice,** *ye* **heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters 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"** (Re.12:12).

While the Heavens had great reason to rejoice that they would no more see Satan, the people living on earth would soon experience the first woe, the fifth trumpet judgment (cf. page 234), as an angry defeated Satan was permanently cast down to earth. Although Satan's time is short before he must ultimately endure eternal incarceration in the lake of fire, he intends to make use of that time to torment and destroy as much of mankind as possible. In particular, he desires to corrupt and decimate Israel, the chosen people of God, from whom the Christ had come forth:

> **"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man** *child"* (Re.12:13).

The angry dragon (i.e. Satan), whose presence has now been restricted to the earth, insanely seeks to persecute and utterly destroy Israel (i.e. the woman), to whom the victorious Christ (the man child) was born, in order to extract from her the ultimate revenge for his defeat.

Israel Flees to Her Place of Safety

> **"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"** (Re.12:14).

This verse specifically refers to the Jews flight from Israel after the Antichrist will have set up an "idol of abomination" in the Holy of

Holies of a future Third Temple[281] (cf. Re.13:13,14). In his Olivet Discourse Jesus had warned his people of this very moment:

> ***"[15]When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand): [16]then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains"*** (Mt.24:15,16).

The word "eagle" in verse 14, is *aetos* in the Greek which designates a powerful bird having a great wingspan. Figuratively, it speaks of god's grace. Here, those "wings" metaphorically speak of Israel's sure flight as they are upheld and transported by the grace and power of God to reach their appointed place of safety. This future safe place, hidden well away from the eyes of Satan, is the one that John had told us about back in verse 6.

God had used "eagle wings" once before to transport his people out of harms way into a vast wilderness area to escape the wrath of the Egyptian Pharaoh, as it is recorded in Exodus 13:18. That wilderness was the desert of the Sinai peninsula, where Israel was nurtured by *manna* (cf. Ex. 16:31) sent down by God from Heaven and had received water from a rock (cf. Nu. 20:11) – both of which represented Christ.[282]

Here in the Revelation, we are told that Israel again will be nurtured by Christ, their Messiah, within a wilderness area, but this time to escape the wrath of Satan, of whom Pharaoh was but a type. Where this future "wilderness" area is located is unknown. Israel's flight upon "eagle wings" could cause us to speculate that it could be somewhere off of the earth's surface, perhaps upon another inhabitable planet somewhere within God's vast cosmos. Nevertheless, the context of verse 12 and following would tend to indicate that it is hidden somewhere upon the earth.

Israel's stay in this place of safety will be for "a time," which is a year; "times," which is two years; and a "half a time," which is one-half year. This exactly corresponds to the "thousand two hundred and three-

[281]cf. Addendum Article: Third Temple of the Last Days, page 516.

[282]cf. Jn.6:57,58; Jn.4:14.

score days" mentioned earlier in verse 6. Therefore, we conclude that the total time the Jewish remnant will spend within this secure wilderness area is the three and one-half year period that corresponds to the second half of Daniel's seventieth week.

> **"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"** (Re.12:15).

The word translated "water" in this verse is *hudor* in the Greek which can be taken literally, or figuratively[283] as it is here. We know this is not a literal flood, inasmuch as John refers to it "as a flood." The words that come out of Satan's mouth will gush forth like a massive flood of water. Unable to locate Israel's hiding place, Satan will devise evil rumors concerning Israel, which through his words will begin a very intense worldwide flood of antisemitism within the hearts of men. Thus, Satan will be able to enlist a great army of anti-Semites in hopes of breaching Israel's stronghold and sweeping her off the face of the earth.

> **"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"** (Re.12:16).

Nevertheless, the great flood of antisemitism that comes out of Satan's mouth will be swallowed up by the earth, as the great trumpet judgments[284] fully occupy men's minds. Taken literally, we could assume that an earthquake will open a deep chasm surrounding Israel's hiding place, further protecting her from Satan's massive onslaught. Regardless of its precise meaning, the flood of antisemitism released by Satan will be "swallowed up," and it will come to naught, as did Pharaoh's army within the Nile river in its earlier pursuit of Israel (cf. Ex.15:4,5).

> **"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and**

[283]We note that the Word of God is metaphorically referred to as water by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:26. Here, however, water metaphorically represents the word of Satan.

[284] cf. Revelation Chapter 8 , page 225.

> **went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ"** (Re.12:17).

Satan was very angry with Israel who had escaped all of his efforts to "wash her away." Therefore, he redirected his efforts "to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Those who "have the testimony of Jesus Christ" would at first appear to describe the Church, who are of the spiritual seed of Abraham and are thus of the seed of Israel through their identity with Christ. However, by this time, the Church will be safely in Heaven, having been transported off the earth within the Rapture.

Therefore, this "remnant" must be seen to refer to Messianic Jews of the latter days who have placed their hope in Jesus as their Messiah, and more specifically the 144,000 Jews who have received the seal of God's protection (cf. Re.7:4;14:1-5), Inasmuch as this remnant must openly provide a bold and continuous witness of Jesus Christ to the world, they have not been hidden away with the rest of Israel, thus making them a visible target of Satan – albeit an impregnable one. ○

Revelation Chapter 13

As we begin our exposition of Chapter 13, we still find ourselves within the secondary narrative that had begun in Chapter 12 that now runs concurrent with the primary narrative of Revelation Chapters 6 and 7[285] – wherein John began to write of "things that shall be hereafter" (cf. Re.1:19). As we saw in our exposition of Chapter 6, the Political Antichrist who is discussed at length in this chapter is the rider of a white horse that will go forth in direct opposition to Christ as Jesus breaks open the first seal of the great Scroll in Heaven (cf. Re. 6:2; page 197). In an ultimate effort to carry out his villainous goal to displace God and his Christ, Satan will call forth a global political ruler who claims to be all-powerful and who is in full opposition to Christ (i.e. anti-Christ). This event marks the beginning of Daniel's Seventieth week of seven years (cf. Illustration 8, page 531).

The First Beast – the Political Antichrist

> **"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"** (Re.13:1).

It would at first seem in the text of verse 1 that John found himself standing upon the sand of the sea. Nevertheless, many of the better underlying Greek manuscripts supplant the first person pronoun "I" found here with the third person singular pronoun "he" – wherein "he" refers to the great dragon (i.e. Satan) from verse 12:17 as the one who is standing upon the sand of the sea.

Moreover, the connective word "and" that begins this verse indicates that it is a continuation of the last verse of Chapter 12 such that the text of this verse must be understood as a continuance of John's observation of events concerning the great red dragon's war with the remnant of the

[285] cf. Illustration 5: Chronology of the Revelation, page 433.

woman's seed, as the dragon now calls forth this beast from out of the sea.

The "sand" can be seen to represent all of humanity and, in particular, the great Gentile world, while the sea represents the ebb and flow of secular world history that has led up to this very moment. We read that a "beast" rose up out of the sea – at Satan's command. This first beast is Antichrist inasmuch as he rises up to fully oppose Christ who has just broken open the first seal of the scroll granting Him absolute authority to rule over the earth (cf. Re. 6:1; page 197).

The Composite Nature of the First Beast

The Greek word for "beast" found in this verse is *therion* that defines a "wild beast," thus representing some form of living creature – commonly associated with the wild animal world. However, this beast is actually a mortal man, as we discover below in Revelation 13:18. In Scripture a beast metaphorically represents a world power with a despotic sovereign as its head. The seven heads of this beast brings us to consider the image of king Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which Daniel had interpreted as representing four godless world empires each headed up by a powerful ruler (cf. Da. 2:31-45).

In Daniel's day, the empires of Egypt and Assyria, the first two heads, had already passed from the scene having failed to attain world-power status. Therefore, the next four world empires represented by Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a great idol were Babylon, the golden head, which had reached world-power status. Babylon was followed by Medo-Persia, having two arms of silver; Greece the thighs of solid brass; and finally Rome, represented by the legs of iron. Following Babylon, the next three empires had each dwindled in status until Rome had crumbled apart from within into a weak federation of European nations, represented in Nebuchadnezzar's image by toes of clay.

The last and seventh head is the ultimate Antichrist, a devout atheist who will have risen up through the political ranks of the Gentile world to become a global dictator. He will combine within himself the power of the six previous world rulers, as he attempts with much initial success

to reassemble the Roman empire of iron from the diverse federation of nations of clay, which had earlier collapsed, having failed to maintain peace in the world.[286]

This political Antichrist will suddenly appear on a very troubled world scene as a potential deliverer from total international chaos. However, he is nothing but a highly charismatic man who will claim to have achieved a form of superior knowledge and abilities – perhaps gained through an implanted artificial intelligence.[287] Both the earth's religious and secular communities will be drawn to him because of his highly progressive solutions to various world problems and for what they envision as his ultimate ability to establish a global peace.

We find as we continue on in verse 1 that the Antichrist carries along with him the heads of ten nations (i.e. ten crowns) who support him and surrender their military power (i.e. ten horns) to him. These represent ten godless nations that have a blasphemous attitude toward God and his true Christ.

> **"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"** (Re.13:2).

In this verse we are given a further description of the political Antichrist through a comparison of his attributes with those of three previous world rulers, whose descriptions are here listed in reverse chronological order of their reign in which they had preceded him. In the prophecy of Daniel we read of these same world rulers listed in chronological order of their reigns, which corresponded to the multi-metallic image that Daniel had previously interpreted (cf. Da. 2:31-45):

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[286]A difficult political compromise must necessarily have taken place to unite the world under a global government with the Antichrist as it's dictatorial head. Some believe this global government to be the United Nations, although it will most likely need to be a far more robust successor that is willing and able to enforce its edicts on the world population through its own powerful military assets.

[287]cf. Preamble, Generative Artificial Intelligence, page 61.

> ***"[3]And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. [4]The first*** *was* ***like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. [5]And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and*** *it had* ***three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. [6]After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it"*** (Da.7:3-6).

The first beast represented as a lion in Revelation verse 4 is Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the second beast represented as a bear in verse 5 is Darius of Media-Persia, and the third represented as a leopard in verse 6 is Alexander the Great of Greece.

The Antichrist of the last days will be a terrible composite of all of those previous world rulers, which Daniel saw in a vision as a fourth beast:

> ***"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"*** (Da.7:7).

The political Antichrist will rapidly reassemble the fractured Roman Empire[288] with the stealth and swiftness of a leopard as he seductively draws men to himself. He will exhibit the raw brutality of a bear when his anger is aroused; and the wild ferocity of a lion when his authority is challenged. Yet he will be radically different from the previous beasts inasmuch as his raw power, exalted position, and great authority does

[288]The remnant of the fractured Roman Empire is recognizable as ten of the nations making up present-day Europe.

not come from himself, but directly from Satan who indwells him. Unlike the rulers before him, we see that he has ten horns – representing ten powerful armies at his disposal. He, like other rulers before him, suffers from an exaggerated sense of personal grander and invincibility as well as a very strong persecution complex.[289]

At this place within the primary narrative, a massive global war breaks out upon the earth in opposition to the Antichrist's despotic rule, ultimately leaving the world desolate. This great war was symbolized by a rider on a red horse, which had gone forth following Jesus' breaking open of the second seal of the Heavenly scroll in Heaven (cf. Re.6:3,4; page 198).

The Antichrist Survives a Deadly Wound

> **"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"** (Re.13:3).

The use of the personal pronoun "his" in this verse and similar personal pronouns found in verses 12 and 14 below as well as in Re.17:8 indicates that this verse refers to a man who is one of the heads that we saw in verse 1. This text reads that "one of his heads" is wounded leading to the question of which of the seven heads is healed of a deadly wound. Some envision the political Antichrist as a resurrection of one of the earlier six heads of an empire such as Nebuchadnezzar, but most of those insist that this will be the evil and insane Roman Emperor Nero. This is highly unlikely inasmuch as Nero took his own life, and we read in the very next verse of this chapter and later in Re.13:14 that an attempt had been made to make war against this "head" and to to assassinate him.

The only credible conclusion to be reached here, based upon a literal rendering of the text, is that the last head, which is the political Antichrist, will have been wounded by an assassin during the great world

[289]Such irrationality had infected previous heads including Nebuchadnezzar and the Roman emperor Nero, which had first originated in Satan himself (cf. Is.14:13,14).

war. However, John's words, "as it were wounded to death" only indicates the fatal severity of his wound, not that he had actually died. Satan does not have the power to raise the dead, but he does have the power to display all forms of lying wonders sufficient to have cleverly counterfeited the political Antichrist's death. Regardless of any certainty regarding his death, the whole world will marvel that he is still alive after having been fatally wounded.

It would appear that his wound, although healed, will have seriously affected the Antichrist's technically-augmented mental faculties, such that he will begin to act very irrationally. At this time, Satan will move to fully indwell the insane Antichrist; such that he now takes on the full characteristics of Satan, whereas before he had previously acted much as would any other despotic dictator, albeit one having highly advanced knowledge and mental ability.

> **"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"** (Re.13:4)?

When it is widely spread abroad that the political Antichrist has been miraculously healed of his fatal injury and is alive and well, it becomes apparent that any future attempt to remove him from power through assassination would be futile and extremely dangerous to contemplate. Moreover, it will be widely publicized that the Antichrist's recovery from death constitutes a miraculous resurrection from the dead. Thus, the satanic Antichrist will attempt to mimic the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, whom in his prideful arrogance he attempts to emulate and supplant. Just as Jesus' resurrection was undeniable proof of his deity, the satanic Antichrist will cite this incident to assert that he is the equal of God. Consequently, men will foolishly worship the Antichrist as well as Satan, who had indwelt and gave power to the beast.

The Great Tribulation Period

At this place within the primary narrative, Jesus breaks open the third and forth seals as famine and pestilence, symbolized by a black and a

pale horse, becomes widespread upon the earth (cf. Re. 6:5-8). A brief period of great tribulation (cf. page 202) begins upon the earth, as under great distress the population of the world literally goes insane with fear, hunger, and disease to the extent that they indiscriminately begin to kill each other for food and survival.

> **"[5]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 [6]and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven"** (Re.13:5,6).

The Antichrist blames God for this terrible chaos and tribulation. Today, men ignorantly blaspheme God in their speech without thought, and without reason, but the Antichrist will blaspheme with the purposeful intent of discrediting the authority of Christ to displace Him on the throne of the earth. At this point, God permits Satan to give the Antichrist a mouth to brag of great things about his person and his accomplishments, while simultaneously speaking vile blasphemies against God with total impunity for forty-two months – the entire last half of the prophetic seven-year period (cf. Da. 7:25).[290]

Satan's Antichrist blasphemes God and his very Name. In blaspheming God's holy Name, he seeks to defile all that God is – the great eternal "I AM" beside whom there is no other (cf. Ex.3:14). He blasphemes all who reverence his name, and he also blasphemes God's tabernacle. The word tabernacle (Greek = *skēnē*) found here does not refer to the Temple of the Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Re.11:1,2), but to the eternal dwelling place or habitation of God, which includes his majestic throne (cf. Re.4:2) and all the vast domain of Heaven.

The satanically inspired Antichrist will also blaspheme all of those who dwell in Heaven; this includes the angelic hosts that had remained loyal to their Creator. They are a target of his blasphemy because, led by

[290] The Political Antichrist along with the False Prophet will be captured and cast into Hell, the lake of fire, at the end of the forty-two months, as Christ returns in great power to establish his Millennial Kingdom upon the earth (cf. Commentary page 375).

the archangel Michael, they had fought against Satan and his fallen angels in a great war in Heaven and had utterly humiliated and defeated him (cf. Re. 12:7,8; page 273).

Inasmuch as Satan had previously lost the great spiritual war in Heaven and had vehemently opposed the reign of Christ on earth, he has now been permanently expelled from Heaven; no longer will he appear before God to give an account of his activities (cf. Job 1:6). Thus, Satan will concentrate his efforts in making war against the remnant of God's people on earth in an attempt to corrupt and utterly destroy them through the devious agency of his Antichrist.

> **"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"** (Re.13:7).

For a brief time, Satan appears to have greater success on the earth than he had in Heaven, as he wars against the saints of God through the activities of the Antichrist, whom he indwells. Not only will the Antichrist blaspheme God with apparent impunity, he will utilize his satanic power to suppress the worship of the One True God to completely overcome any resistance to his own evil rule throughout the world.

> **"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"** (Re.13:8).

The Antichrist will receive the accolades and worship from all of the reprobate remaining on earth – whose names are not found written in the Lamb's book of life.

> **"[9]If any man have an ear, let him hear. [10]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"** (Re. 13:9,10).

This verse indicates that there will still be "men" who have an "ear to hear" remaining upon the earth; these are the Elect of God. Therefore, the "saints" spoken of in this verse lilely refers to the dwindling remnant of the persecuted Church on earth, as well as a great company of persecuted messianic Jews who also remain upon the earth. This verse is both a call for their patience and a call for them to hold firmly to their faith. Those who honor God must patiently endure the wrath of the Antichrist rather than rise up in armed rebellion against him, for should they attempt to do so they will most certainly be taken captive and will be "killed with the sword" (cf. Da. 7:25).

The Tribulation is Cut Short

As Jesus breaks open the sixth seal within the primary narrative (cf. Re. 6:12, page 204), the madness of the great tribulation of those times will be cut short as a great display of God's power and might appears in the heavens – climaxing in the sign of the Lord Jesus' return in clouds of glory (cf. Re. 6:12-14, 16). During this brief interval between the sixth and seventh seal, 144,000 devout Jews will be sealed to witness on earth of Christ as their true Messiah; and Jesus Christ will call down for his persecuted Church to leave the earth to join Him in the earth's upper atmosphere, thus safely out of the way of Satan's atrocious atheistic barrage that is about to come forth upon the earth (cf. 1Th. 4:13-17; Re, 7:9-17; page 216).

The Second Beast – the False Prophet

Now that the Church has been Raptured and no longer remains upon the earth, Satan will attempt to divert the intrinsic religious desire of the remaining reprobate of mankind away from any latent worship of Jesus Christ and toward the Political Antichrist. To accomplish this, Satan will raise up a religious leader (a false prophet), here at the mid-point of Daniel's seventieth week, to "drum up" religious fervor in the remaining populace for the political dictator. Therefore, while the first beast is Antichrist inasmuch as he opposes Christ, this second beast is also An-

tichrist in the sense that he will attempt to imitate Christ and the Holy Spirit through faking the many miracles that Christ had performed.[291]

> **"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"** (Re.13:11).

Unlike the political Antichrist who rose up out of the sand and the sea of the Gentile world,[292] this False Prophet (the second wild beast) will rise up out of the earth. The word translated "earth" is *ghay* in the Greek, which can be translated as earth, ground, land, or country. Therefore, this verse could be interpreted to mean that the False Prophet will come up out of the "land of Israel," as opposed to the vast sand and sea of the Gentile world.

Unlike the first creature who had led a consortium, this second beast appears to act alone. Moreover, we find that he has very little military might or political authority of his own, but he has "two horns like a lamb" in accord with his emulation of Jesus Christ. However, the force of his words exert great influence upon the remaining earth dwellers inasmuch as "he spake as a dragon" (i.e, as Satan). This false prophet will attempt to emulate the works of the Holy Spirit who indwells and reveals the wonders of Christ to the Elect, but instead he will extol the lying wonders of the satanic Antichrist to the reprobate. Through the efforts of this false prophet, a great global religious system will be quickly established to bolster the world's collapsing political government into a spurious ideology of evil.

The apostate temporal church, still remaining upon the earth after the Rapture of the true Church had taken place, will quickly align itself with this movement, seeing it as a furthering of its own goals of ecumenical coexistence and universal brotherhood. Thus, any remaining Christian doctrines will have been fully sacrificed to comply with the insistent de-

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[291]Technically, the satanic ruler who opposes Christ will carry the name, "Antichrist" and the religious leader will carry the name "False Prophet," but they are both essentially one in Satan, who will fully indwell, motivate, and control them.

[292]cf. Re.13:1.

mands of the false prophet to worship the first beast, the political Antichrist.

> **"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"** (Re.13:12).

The false prophet essentially exercises the same power as the first beast, since he exhorts the entire world to worship the political Antichrist who in turn supports him. He points out the power of the political Antichrist to raise men from the dead, inasmuch as he has already demonstrated that power through his own purported resurrection from the dead (cf page 283). This statement is absolute blasphemy, for while that is true of Jesus Christ, the firstborn of the dead, it is sacrilege to say the same is true of the Antichrist.

The Great Messiah-Delusion

Having completed the construction of the Third Temple[293] in Jerusalem, under the Antichrist's protection as a provision of a pact that they had made with him,[294] the nation of Israel will have expected their Messiah to soon come to them. So powerful will be the Messiah-delusion of the satanic Antichrist that Israel will have been deceived into accepting him as their long-awaited Messiah. As Jesus had said of them,

> **"*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*"** (Jn.5:43).

Not only will the people of Israel have admired and feared the political Antichrist, they also will have been deceived into worshiping him as their true Messiah. In doing so, they were ignorantly worshiping Satan, that evil seductive dragon who empowers him.

> **"And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire**

[293]cf. Article, Third Temple of the Last Days, page 516.

[294]cf. Illustration 8: The Seventieth Week of Daniel, page 531.

> **come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men"** (Re.13:13).

Imbued with the power of Satan, the false prophet will emulate the Christ through the exercise of many false miracles and will even demonstrate an Elijah-like power to call fire down from Heaven (cf. 2Ki.1:12). In doing so, he will stand in direct opposition to the two witnesses sent by God who, as we have seen, had been given similar and even greater powers (cf. Re 11:3-5).

The Abomination of Desolation

> **"And [he] 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"** (Re.13:14).

Through his deceptive "miracles," Satan will seduce all of reprobate mankind into worshiping him through the Antichrist, ultimately saying through the False Prophet "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"** (Re.13:15).

In Old-Testament times, images were carved out of wood, overlaid with gold, were carried about and propped up, but they could not hear, speak, or execute any action (cf. Je.10:3–5). Unlike those earlier idols, this highly sophisticated image of the Antichrist will appear to be alive perhaps through the means of an Artificial General Intelligence (AGI),[295]

[295]The image will both speak with authority and have the superior ability to root out all those who do not worship the Antichrist in order to have them killed, most likely by assassin "drones" or other intelligent "bots" that are directed by its vast computer resources. The reach of this image can be likened to the vast computer network that most of us already use every day. Many are

which has been programmed into it. This image of the Antichrist is the "Abomination of Desolation" spoken of by Daniel the prophet that through the "overspreading of abominations" he will render the faith of the apostate Jew desolate (cf. Mt. 24:15). This ultimate abomination that makes desolate will be set up in the false Third Temple at the mid-point of Daniel's seventieth week (cf. Da. 9:27; page 201).

The Jew had been effectively cured of idol worship because of the abundance of profane idol worship they had encountered during their Babylonian captivity. Therefore, at the very moment that this idol of the Antichrist appears, Israel will have their eyes opened to the evil intent and true nature of the Antichrist. This will result in their abandonment of the sullied Third Temple, and will further result in a mass exodus of Jews out of Jerusalem into the place of safety that God had previously prepared for them (cf. Mt.24:15-20; Re.12:6,14). Only a sealed remnant of 144,000 Jews will remain behind in the city to witness of the true Messiah, the Christ, as we shall observe later when we study the text of Revelation Chapter 14.

The Mark of the Antichrist

> **"[16]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: [17]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"** (Re.13:16,17).

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already installing Artificial Intelligence devices in their homes, which respond to human voice commands with a simulated voice, in order to provide information or to control a system of other devices within their homes. In addition, most smart phones that people carry on their person have this same AI built in and enabled. While artificial intelligence seems to be a great convenience in a fast-paced world, it must be understood that each and every AI device within close proximity is constantly listening to every word that is spoken. It is sending it all back over the Internet to one or more of its central locations for analysis and processing in order for it to complete its function. In the future, a similar analysis will be made by a far-advanced computerized idol that has been programmed to mark out all the enemies of the Antichrist for termination.

This lifelike image will demand that every living man, woman, and child from every station and walk of life must receive a mark that they must either have implanted in their right hand, or have implanted within their forehead.[296] This mark will contain the digital signature of the beast as a number that represents his name.[297] Added to that number will be an additional number uniquely identifying each individual as belonging to him.[298] Without that satanic mark a person will not be able to carry on any business or commerce anywhere in the world; furthermore, they cannot work to secure food, clothing, or shelter.

More significantly, this mark identifies those who have received it as a member of the satanic kingdom of the Antichrist. Willingly accepting the mark of the Antichrist will be paramount to openly denying the Lord Jesus Christ and the rejection of his coming Kingdom. Once having received that mark it cannot be removed; it remains an indelible marking identifying the reprobate for eternal judgment along with the Antichrist who owns him.

The Number of the Beast

> **"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"** (Re.13:18).

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[296]In that day there will be no currency that can be held in the hand; it will be a totally cashless digital currency fully controlled by the Antichrist through his abominable idol. There will be no private transactions possible; all purchases, no matter how small, will be traceable; the product, the purchaser, the seller, and the location of every transaction will be readily identifiable.

[297]We already have microchips that can be permanently implanted to accomplish this means of identification, and some are already being used by certain high-tech industries for that very purpose.

[298]As a current example, individual Bank accounts are identified by a routing number of the institution followed by an additional number identifying the account holder. In that day, there will be but one global financial institution, that of the Antichrist, who will control all of the world's wealth through a massive computer system operated by a satanic artificial intelligence.

The Antichrist already has a number assigned to him, and that number is 666, which this verse states is the number of a man. In the past, this verse has been responsible for many determined but failed attempts to root out the man who is, or who will become, the Antichrist. Some have attempted to assign Hebrew, Greek, or Latin letters to these three numbers to decode 666 into his name.

It should be noted that it was common in antiquity to calculate a number from the name of famous men. The means by which those numbers were calculated was known as Gemitra,[299] which had its origin in an Assyrian-Babylonian-Greek alphanumeric cipher or code. Gemitra had been utilized by the Jews during their Babylonian captivity, such that it became a part of their Hebrew Etymology. An identical number can be derived from various names or even various phrases. Thus, it was not uncommon for Jews to associate men's names with words or phrases when a similar calculation produced that same number. Those additional words and phrases were seen as defining that person's character and/or determining their activities.

The Preterist[300] has used a form of Gemitra by which they have ascertained that 666 in this verse refers to the emperor Nero. Others say it actually refers to one or all of three other Emperors: Domitian, Vespasian, and Titus. Some others have even ventured to say that 666 referred to Joseph Stalin or Adolph Hitler.

Still others see the number 6 as a number designating a man, who is imperfect, in the same sense that the number 7 is symbolic of deity having absolute perfection. Following that reasoning, 666 could be seen to indicate the unholy trinity consisting of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet, much in the same way that the number 777 could be seen to represent the Triune Godhead.

All of this numerical speculation aside, it may be that this verse is only intended to provide some insight as to the background and character of the Antichrist – not his actual identity. Conceding that possibility,

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[299] cf. Newsletter Article March 2020, wherein we discussed Gemitra in more detail.

[300] cf. Addendum Article on Covenantalism, regarding Preterism, on page 452.

there are two places, other than here in the Revelation, where six hundred threescore and six appears in Scripture. Those texts are found in 1Ki. 10:14 and 2Chr. 9:13. In both instances, it describes the tribute received by Solomon in a year's time. Accordingly, the man of which "666" is the number could appear to be Solomon-like. Further supporting this view, this verse begins with, "Here is wisdom" – another attribute properly attributed to Solomon. Therefore, Antichrist could be a man who appears to have the wisdom of Solomon and also a man of great financial wealth, as was Solomon. Following that assumption to a logical end, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Antichrist could come from, or perhaps only appears to come from, a future apostate nation of Israel.[301]

Even so, none of this speculation leads us anywhere that can be remotely considered conclusive. Inasmuch as it is quite possible that John may have only intended the number 666 to identify the Antichrist to saints living in the far future, not to those within his immediate day, the identification of the Antichrist may only become possible when this ultimate man of sin actually appears on the scene. If so, only to that future generation will the number 666 have any valid meaning, thus rendering all current efforts to search out his identity in this day and age a futile waste of time. ○

[301]There is some Scriptural indication that this may be true. The false prophet came up out of the land (i.e. out of the land of Israel), whereas the political Antichrist came up out of the vast sea of the Gentile nations (cf. Re. 13:1,11).

Revelation Chapter 14

Within Chapter 13 of the secondary narrative, we found that the false prophet (i.e. the second beast) had placed a detestable image of the political Antichrist[302] within the Third Temple,[303] thus rendering it entirely desolate of any godly purpose. This abominable idol had precipitated a mass exodus of Jews out of the city of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, a sealed remnant consisting of 144,000 Jews had not left Jerusalem with the greater multitude of Jews, inasmuch as they had been sealed by God[304] to endure the severe trials of the time ahead to provide a powerful witness to the world for the lordship of Jesus Christ.

As we begin our exposition of Revelation Chapter 14, we note that this text essentially parallels Chapter 8 of the primary narrative,[305] wherein Jesus opens the last seal of the scroll in Heaven, and the first four of the seven trumpet judgments takes place in the form of four celestial disturbances that are hurled down out of the heavens onto the earth.

The Lamb and the 144,000

The first five verses of this current chapter tells us of a meeting that takes place in Jerusalem between the sealed remnant of Jews and Jesus Christ, their Messiah. In keeping with the Jewish context in which this book is written, Christ is again referred to here as a Lamb.

> **"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**

[302]cf. The Abomination of Desolation, page 290.

[303]cf. Addendum: Article, Third Temple of the Last Days, page 516.

[304]cf. Sealing of 144,000 from the Nation of Israel, page 212.

[305]cf. Illustration 5, page 433.

foreheads" (Re.14,1).

The next thing that John saw after giving us the number of the beast in Chapter 13 was the slain Lamb, Jesus Christ, standing upon mount Sion (i.e. Zion), God's holy hill, within the city of Jerusalem[306] along with 144,000 sealed Jews. These Jews are the antithesis of Satan's sealed followers whom we observed had received his mark in Chapter 13. We find in this verse that the seal that the chosen Jews had received consisted of God the Father's "Name," which had been indelibly written in their foreheads. Thus, they were permanently sealed unto God the Father and as such had absolute invincibility against Satan's furious wrath and the extreme wave of persecution that was about to follow (cf. Mal. 3:16,17).

> **"[2]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: [3]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"** (Re.14:2,3).

This thunderous voice that John heard from Heaven was like unto the roar of a massive waterfall that was frequently punctuated by mighty thunderous crashes of water. Within that roar he heard the voices of Heavenly singers accompanied by their harps. They sang a new song before the throne of God as the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders listened.

This is a unique song of redemption that is applicable only to the 144,000 Jews, who had been uniquely saved through a direct act of God the Father in a way that had not been experienced, seen, or known by

[306]Conspicuously absent in this dialog is any mention of the Third Temple that the Jews will have built under the auspices of the political Antichrist, and that as this meeting takes place would have the Abomination of Desolation standing within it. This would tend to lend credence to the speculation that the third Temple had not been built upon mount Zion, but had been erroneously built upon some other crest of land. (cf. Location of the Third Temple, Addendum page 518).

any other member of Adam's fallen race. Indeed, these are the chosen seed of Israel's race, who were uniquely ransomed from the fall. Only that redeemed remnant could learn and sing this new song heard from Heaven, which echoed their assurance of the unique salvation sealed within their minds and hearts, that enabled them to stand firm against all their many adversaries.

The Unique Character of the 144,000

> **"[4]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, [5]and in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God"** (Re.14:4,5).

In these two verses, John gives us a description of the unique character of those chosen men. First, it is stated that they are "not defiled with women; for they are virgins." The word "virgin" (Greek, *parthenos*) found here is directly applied elsewhere in Scripture to a woman – a chaste maiden, an unmarried daughter. Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul had also used the word *parthenos* to metaphorically apply to men in a spiritual sense:

> ***"For I am jealous [as a father] over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present*** *you as* ***a chaste virgin to Christ"*** (2Co. 11:2).[307]

Applied similarly in this current verse, *parthenos* (i.e. virgin) could be interpreted to mean that these are men who have kept themselves apart from the Antichrist, do not have his mark upon them, and are therefore spiritually celibate and chaste – having fully consecrated themselves to God alone. Nevertheless, a more literal interpretation is also possible. During the time that the Antichrist rules the earth, sexual

[307]Words in brackets were added for clarity by this author and are not in the original text.

immorality will be abundant and very widespread, yet these men will have kept themselves pure and far removed from such sinful activities.

It has been generally assumed that these Jews were all unmarried men. That would certainly be appropriate for the frightful times that they are about to endure (cf. Je.16:1 &ff; Mt.24:19), but when it is said that they are "not defiled with women" it would not necessarily exclude some or all of them from being married to a wife, inasmuch as marriage is an honorable estate of unity in which there is no defilement possible (cf. He.13:4).

When God saved Noah from the judgment of the flood, he did not save him alone, but his wife and his sons along with their wives as well (cf. Ge. 6:18). As God sealed Noah in the ark, his family was sealed in with him. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that there will be 144,000 men sealed, and that their families also will be carried safely within the "ark" of God's protection during the "flood" of severe judgments that are about to follow.

It does not necessarily follow that their families will have remained with them in Jerusalem, however, for it is not said that they too will have been sealed. When the False Prophet had placed the Abomination of Desolation in the third Temple, their families could have been included within the mass exodus of Jews from Jerusalem to the hidden place of safety that God had previously prepared for them (cf. Re.12:6). The assurance that their loved ones are safely protected would leave these sealed Jewish men free to follow the Lamb "wheresoever He goes" as they fearlessly witness of Him and his coming Kingdom throughout the world in the face of incredible threats and attempts to kill them.

It is stated that these men are the "first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." First fruits were the first and best of a crop offered up to God from a great harvest. In that sense, these men were the first and best of the Jewish crop that is offered up to God. Being fully redeemed and sanctified, there is no guile (Greek *dolos*) no duplicity or deceit found in them that would ever discredit them before God. It must also be recalled that their sealing and redemption had taken place just before the Church appeared in Heaven, thus indeed making them the first fruits of those

who are fully redeemed.[308] Instead of being removed from the earth, as was the Church, they must remain upon the earth to bear faithful witness of Christ, their Messiah.

This great company of sealed men along with God's two powerful witnesses[309] will blanket the entire world with the Gospel of the coming Kingdom Age during the second half of Daniel's seventieth week. Many Gentiles as well as Jews will be redeemed through the preaching of their message during that time.

The Dire Warning of Three Flying Angels

As we near the end of this prophetic seven-year period, God makes one final appeal to the reprobate earth dwellers, who have not heeded the message of his two witnesses nor that of the sealed Jewish remnant. He declares this final warning through the voices of three flying angels – just before the excruciating effects of the seventh trumpet judgment must be experienced by the rebellious multitude still remaining upon the earth. Thus, verses 6 thru 11 below can be seen to parallel Chapter 9 of the primary narrative[310] of the Revelation after the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments had been sent forth upon the earth and while the seventh trumpet is yet pending.

> **"[6]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 [7]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"** (Re.14:6,7).

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[308]cf. Sealing of 144,000 from the Nation of Israel page 212.

[309]cf. God's Sends Two Witnesses to Israel, page 256.

[310] cf. Illustration 5, page 433.

The previous flying angel that John had seen announced three woes concerning the last three trumpet judgments (cf. Re. 8:13, page 231), such that we could easily seek to identify these flying angels with him. However, "another angel" found in verse 6 would indicate that this angel is distinct from any other angel that John had previously seen. Like the previous flying angel, this angel's message, as well as that of the next two angels, will likewise be heard by everyone dwelling upon the earth.

This is the only place that the word "gospel" (Greek, *euaggelion*) appears in the text of the Revelation. God had ordained that the Gospel should be preached by redeemed men to the lost (cf. Mt:28:16-20), but at this late hour God will send an angel from high in the heavens to directly confront reprobate mankind with the eternal Gospel so that every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people clearly hears it before judgment comes upon them. What had been "good news" of redemption to so many who had earlier heeded the call to repent and accept Christ as their Lord and Savior has now become very bad news to those who had wickedly despised and vehemently rejected it.

This angel's message is in fact a stern final warning for them to glorify God and to "worship Him as the creator of Heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters," for the "hour of his judgment is come." It is significant to note that this is also the first time that the word "judgment" (Greek, *krisis*) is found within the Revelation.

This final hour had been previously signaled by an angel blowing the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11 verse 15, but now the consequences of that ominous sound is to be felt over the entire earth.

> **"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"** (Re.14:8).

This second flying angel immediately follows the previous angel with the great proclamation that "Babylon is fallen." Babylon, founded after the great flood by Nimrod (cf. Ge.10:8,10), has been the root of all

false religion throughout the ages,[311] and "she has made all the nations drink of the wine of her fornication." The ancient city of Babylon lies in ruin within today's nation of Iraq. As such, the angel is specifically referring to the nonredeemable fallen state of that ancient city as an example and warning.[312]

> **"[9]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, [10]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 [11]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."** (Re.14:9-11).

This is an extreme inexorable warning issued by this third angel regarding any who would "worship the Antichrist and his image, and who have received his mark in his forehead, or in his hand." Moreover, it is a pronouncement of impending judgment for those who have already done so. There is no middle ground here; one must choose to serve God or serve Satan, and the mark of the Antichrist is the indelible proof of their decision to serve Satan.

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[311]cf. Addendum Article; Babylon, the Satanic Root of False Religion, page 589.

[312]Although at this point in the chronology of events, the Antichrist's Babylon has yet to be destroyed (cf. Re.16:19; 18:2), her destruction is as inevitable as was the destruction of ancient Babylon. The sudden demise of the domain of the Antichrist and of those who had engaged in her spiritual fornication and corrupt commercial activities for their personal gain and for their ungodly sensual pleasure, will come as a terrible shock to the reprobate inhabitants of the earth – as did the earlier destruction of Babylon to those in ancient times (cf. Revelation Chapters 17 and 18).

Without the mark of the Antichrist, men and women will not be able to procure food, clothing, or shelter. Therefore, those who have refused his mark will risk physical death from his angry wrath, even as they must face death from starvation and deprivation. For that reason, many will have already accepted the mark of the Antichrist and will have drunk of the wine of Babylon's fornication. Those that have done so must now "drink of the wine of the wrath of God," which is poured out undiluted from the cup of his indignation;[313] and they "shall be eternally 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."

For those who already have the mark of the beast upon them, the angel's warning has come too late. Hell is the inevitable end for those who "worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

Nevertheless, there will still be a few saints remaining upon the earth who by the grace of God have avoided or will have refused the mark of the beast and have not yet suffered death:

> **"[12]Here is the patience of the saints: here** *are* **they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. [13]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"** (Re.14:12,13)**.**

At this point in time, the Church had been removed from the earth and the great age of unmerited grace had come to an end – yet works of righteousness are still required of all those who have remained upon the earth. This verse specifically applies to those godly men and women living upon the earth during that future age who are under severe persecution by the Antichrist. These are keepers of "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," signifying they are both converted Jews and re-

[313]cf. Ps. 75:8.

deemed Gentiles. Because they have refused to receive Antichrist's mark of ownership, they have been systematically hunted down and marked for death by the agencies of his satanic idol, the Abomination of Desolation, which is standing in the Third Temple. A martyr's death awaits them all, which they must accept with resigned patience.

John is told by a voice out of Heaven to write down a message that is specifically intended for those saints living within that future age: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth," for through martyrdom they will receive rest from their labors and will be further entitled to receive a reward for their patient perseverance in the face of certain death.

Verses 14 thru 20 of this chapter can be seen to parallel Chapter 11 of the primary narrative, during which the Third Temple on earth was marked for destruction and God had sent two powerful witnesses to Israel. The two witnesses had been subsequently killed by satanic forces, were restored to life, and had then ascended back into Heaven. This was immediately followed by the sounding of the seventh trumpet, as the true Temple in Heaven was revealed.[314]

The Harvest of the Earth

In his parable of the "Wheat and the Tares" recorded in Matthew Chapter 13, the Lord Jesus spoke of a future final harvest of the earth that would take place near the very end of this current age. This harvest will consist of a crop of "wheat" grown from good seed planted by Jesus Christ and a crop of "tares" (i.e. weeds) grown from an alien seed implanted by Satan, which had sprung up in the midst of the wheat. About these two seeds Jesus had said,

> ***"Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn"*** (Mt. 13:30).

[314] cf. Illustration 5, page 433.

Initially the small sprigs grown from evil seed may look much like those sprigs grown of good seed – until they have grown up together for a while and their fruit begins to develop. Therefore, it becomes possible at the time of harvest to differentiate the wheat, representing the redeemed, from the tares, representing the reprobate, by the kind of fruit they had produced over their lifetimes – whether it be good or bad.

At the time of the harvest, the Lord Jesus will say to the reapers to gather all the tares into bundles to be burned, but to gather all the wheat safely into his storehouse.

In Matthew 13:37, Jesus went on to explain the meaning of the metaphors used in the parable of the tares in the verses that follow:

> ***"[37]He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; [38]The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked*** *one;* ***[39]The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels" (*****Mt. 13:37-39).**

Jesus explained that the field is the world. He, the Son of Man, is the sower who had sown the good seed, which had grown up in the world to ultimately become men and women populating the Kingdom of God. Simultaneously, Satan had sown evil seed that had choked out the good seed as it grew up to be replaced with the reprobate who had greatly hindered the progression of the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

"Barn" (i.e. storehouse) found in this parable is a metaphor Jesus used for the place that He has carefully prepared for the eternal habitation of his redeemed – represented in this parable by a good crop of wheat. In the harvest to come, the wheat will be taken into the storehouse, a metaphor for Heaven, while the evil tares will be gathered together and will be cast into a great furnace of fire (i.e. Hell). This harvest will take place at the end of the age, and the angels sent forth by the Lord Jesus Christ will be the reapers working under his direct command.

This parable becomes stark reality, as we now return to our current place in the text of the book of the Revelation.

Gathering of the Crop of Good Seed

> **"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,"** (Re. 14:14)

John saw "*one*" "like unto the Son of Man" sitting upon a white cloud and holding a sharp sickle in his hand. The text of Daniel 7:13, also contains the phrase "like unto the Son of man," which unquestionably refers to Jesus Christ (cf. Da.7:14). Moreover, "Son of man" is the title that Jesus most often applied to Himself during his earthly ministry.[315] This would lend considerable credence to the assumption that the one sitting upon the white cloud could be none other than Jesus Christ Himself – a view this author had previously set forth in earlier revisions of this book. Nevertheless, in Matthew 13:39 and 13:41[316], Jesus had expressly stated that all of the reapers would be his angels. For that reason, the precise identity of the "one" whom John saw sitting on the white cloud is not so easily resolved.

In immediate context, the words "like unto" found in verse 14 (Greek, *homoios*) would suggest that the "one" John saw sitting upon the white cloud is an angelic deputy of Christ, who for that reason presents himself as being similar in appearance to Christ. Furthermore, verse 15 that immediately follows this text refers to "another angel" which would indicate that the reaper that John saw sitting on the cloud is actually an angel who prepares to reap the crop of good seed.

The crown seen upon the reaper's head is *stephanos* in the Greek – a "victor's crown," which is made of gold. It is not said elsewhere in Scripture that angels ever wear crowns of gold – yet this particular angel may be doing so in his representation of the victorious Christ. Regardless of whether the one sitting on the white cloud is Christ or his an-

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[315]cf. Mt.9:6; 12:8; 17:22; Mt:24:30; Mk.2:28; Mk.13:26; Lu.12:40 etc.

[316]cf. text on page 307

gelic deputy, it must be understood that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who directs every aspect of this great victorious harvest from on high.

The "white cloud," in verse 14 as opposed to a dark cloud, implies the benevolent intent of this reaper who is sitting upon it. In the hand of the "one who sits on this white cloud" is a sharp sickle (Greek *drepanon* – a sharp hooked blade mounted on the end of a long pole). Such an implement was commonly used for harvesting a crop of grain when it had become mature:

> **"[28]*The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.* [29]*But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come"* (**Mk.4:28,29).

Now, another angel appears out of God's Temple; for the earth is now ripe to harvest, and the time for its reaping has come (cf. Mt.13:39):

> **"[15]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; [16]and he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped"** (Re.14:15,16)**.**

In its immediate context, this harvest consists of the garnering of the saints whom we saw in verses 12 and 13 above – the keepers of "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus," to which they had firmly held in the face of their ultimate deaths, which had been threatened by the demonic idol of the Antichrist.[317]

The Father sends still another angel out of the Temple in Heaven (cf. Re.11:19) to inform the one on the white cloud that the time to reap is now come, inasmuch as this final "crop" of saints[318] has matured – is now complete. This first part of the harvest consists of the merciful reap-

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[317]cf. The Abomination of Desolation Commentary page 290 and Addendum page 547.

[318]This final crop of saints does not refer to the earlier Rapture of the Church (cf. The Church Appears in Heaven, Commentary page 215).

ing of those saints remaining upon the earth through a personal directive out of Heaven. Thus, the good crop will be fully reaped just before the seven final bowl judgments[319] are poured out on a totally reprobate world.

Gathering of the Crop of Evil Seed

> **"[17]And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. [18]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"** (Re.14:17,18)**.**

Whereas the first reaper we saw sitting on a white cloud had gathered the mature crop of saints from the earth to spare them from the wrath to come, a second angel, also carrying a sharp sickle, is seen coming out of the Temple in Heaven, whose mission is to gather together the crop of evil seed to be burned.

> ***[40]As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. [41]The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; [42]And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth"*** (Mt.13:40-42).

Immediately, an additional angel, which had authority over fire, came out from his place at the altar of incense where he had been offering up the prayers of saints within the Heavenly Temple; he shouted to the first angel to put in his sickle to gather up the clusters of the vine of the earth's evil world system that remain upon the earth. The operation of the first angel consists of cutting and gathering up wild unruly vines having clusters of rotten (fully ripe) grapes hanging from them; these

[319] cf. Seven Bowls Filled With God's Wrath, page 315.

grapes represent the ungodly works of the reprobate, who have the mark of the Antichrist upon them.

A Purview of Armageddon

> **"[19]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, [20]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"** (Re,14:19,20).

The first angel with the sharp sickle uses it to gather the rotten grapes from the wild vines of the earth. Once the vines are bared of their rotten fruit by the first angel, the second angel consumes the empty vines with fire. The rotten fruit with small sprigs of vine still attached to it are then cast into a great wine press to be crushed under foot.

The word winepress (Greek, *lǣnos* = "trough"*)* is used here as a metaphor for a great trough in the earth – a long valley – wherein God has chosen to enact his vengeance upon the works of the reprobate, with wrath unrestrained by his mercy. This place is to be the great winepress of the wrath of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ will be the one who will crush under his feet the rotten fruit of the reprobate, along with all who have opposed Him:

> ***"I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people*** *there was* ***none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment"*** (Is.63:3; cf. Re. 19:11-13).

The words "without the city" found in verse 20 indicates that this great "winepress" is not located within Jerusalem, but is removed some distance from it. The word "winepress" as it is being used here is a metaphor for the long valley of Megiddo, located north of Jerusalem near the current Lebanese border. This is where the great war of Ar-

mageddon will take place.[320] The armies of Satan will make ready as Christ returns to earth on a great white horse leading the massive armies of Heaven to totally crush his enemies – the rotten grapes hanging from these wretched vines of the earth's satanic systems. (cf. Re.19:11,14).

> ***"And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth"*** (Is. 63:6).

As the Antichrist's armies will be slaughtered, their blood will splash up as high as a horse's bridle (about three to four feet) from the valley floor. Moreover, this great carnage will extend for "a thousand and six hundred furlongs," or about 190 miles. This is the approximate distance from the Israeli cities of Dan in the north to Beer-Sheba in the south. Thus, we find that this great battle will be waged throughout the land of present-day Israel including the greater region of Palestine.

It is significant to note that verse 20 of the text of this Chapter marks the end of the secondary narrative that had begun with verse 1 of Chapter 12,[321] just after the seventh and last trumpet had begun to sound back in Chapter 11, verse 15,[322]and at which time the Temple in Heaven was opened in verse 19.[323] ○

[320]cf. The War of Armageddon, page 372.

[321]cf. Illustration 5, page 433.

[322]cf. The Third Woe – The Seventh Trumpet Sounds, page 262.

[323]cf. God's Temple in Heaven is Opened, page 263.

Revelation Chapter 15

Chapter 15, is the shortest chapter in the book of the Revelation. Nevertheless, it provides an all-important preamble to the pouring out of seven bowls of God's undiluted wrath, which will be spoken of in some detail within Chapter 16.

As we begin this Chapter, we resume our exposition of the primary chronological narrative of the Revelation that had been interrupted with the beginning of a highly significant secondary narrative that had begun in verse 1 of Chapter 12, just after the seventh and last trumpet had begun to sound back in Chapter 11, verse 15.[324] The sounding of the seventh Trumpet was attended with great rejoicing in Heaven declaring that "The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." Immediately the Temple in Heaven was opened to view in verse 19, which had then led us directly into the secondary narrative of Chapter 12.

The Thirty-Day Period of God's Wrath

As we now continue into Chapter 15, we note that the sounding of the seventh trumpet had signaled the end of Daniel's seventieth week and the Day of the Lord,[325] thus leading directly into an additional thirty-day period,[326] during which the reprobate of all the Gentile nations of the earth, which had earlier risen up against Jerusalem, will experience seven deadly bowl judgments in rapid-fire order – one immediately following after another, with only one brief interval of time[327] placed between the pouring out of the sixth and seventh bowl.

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[324]cf. The Third Woe – The Seventh Trumpet Sounds, page 262.

[325]cf. Illustration 8: The Seventieth Week of Daniel, page 531.

[326]cf. Illustration 9: Seventy-five Days following the Seventieth Week, page 535.

[327]cf. Interval Between the Sixth and Seventh Bowl, page 325.

The earlier six trumpet judgments had not been total in the scope of their destruction, each affecting but one-third of the earth at a time. Moreover, they had been spaced out over time allowing brief opportunities for man's repentance. Unfortunately, few if any will have taken advantage of those opportunities, choosing instead to remain within their iniquitous state of defiance. Therefore, as this foreboding thirty-day period begins, the time allotted for mankind's repentance will have come to an abrupt end – not through God's divine choice alone, but also because of mankind's obstinate refusal to fully submit to his sovereign authority, and in doing so receive the redemption that God had freely offered them through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Thus, during this next thirty days, God will unleash his fierce pent-up wrath against all of the reprobate peoples of the Gentile nations of the earth without restraint. At the end of this final sequence of calamities, there will be no reprobate men remaining upon the earth to oppose God and his Christ – even as a redeemed remnant of Israel mourns over their earlier rejection of their true Messiah, which had ultimately led them to demand his painful death by crucifixion that was ultimately carried out by their Roman captors:

> ***"[9]And it shall come to pass in that day,*** *that* ***I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. [10]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"*** (Ze. 12:9,10).

In that day, God will destroy all of the Gentile nations that had risen up against Jerusalem, leaving but a remnant of Gentiles from each, while He will pour out the spirit of grace and supplications upon the descendants of David, the true inhabitants of Jerusalem. When they look upon their long-awaited Messiah, whom they had fatally wounded, their mourning will be very bitter indeed. Every man, woman, and child who

are truly of Israel will clearly perceive their shameful guilt as individual members of each family and tribe that had earlier crucified their native son and Lord; their mourning will be very deep and personal:

> ***[11]"In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.[12]And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; [13]The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;[14]All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart"*** (Ze. 12:11-14).[328]

With the foregoing text by way of introduction, we shall now begin a direct exposition of Chapter 15, in which we discover that John had just seen a great and marvelous sign, consisting of seven magnificent angels filled up with the wrath of God, who are preparing to vent his righteous wrath upon the earth's remaining reprobate population through seven final plagues:

John's Vision of Seven Angels

> **"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"** (Re.15:1).

The previous "sign" that John said He had seen in Heaven was in Chapter 12; it was the "sign" of a woman, representing Israel, which John had described as a "great wonder" (cf. Re. 12:1). He refers to this next "sign" in Heaven as being "great and Marvelous," for it consists of the appearance of seven magnificent angels that are filled up with God's divine indignation and wrath.

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[328] Verse 11 refers to the great mourning that took place in the valley of Megiddo when Josiah the King of Judah was mortally wounded in an attack by two Syrian divisions (cf. 2Ki. 23:29,30).

The word "plague" commonly implies a contagious epidemic of disease with an extremely high death rate. However, "plague" as it is found here is *plǣ gē* in the Greek, which has a primary meaning of a grievous "wound" or a great "calamity." Those seven last plagues will be massive calamitous onslaughts of God's wrath that will impact the reprobate earth-dwellers with a powerful inescapable death-dealing blow.

> **"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"** (Re.15:2).

John had seen this "sea of glass" before, extending from and all about the throne of God, which he recorded earlier in Revelation 4:6, but there it was smooth and tranquil. John now sees this once-tranquil crystal sea disquieted with the fire of God's anger against the persecutors of his people. Those standing upon the glassy sea are most likely the last faithful remnant of Jews and Gentiles, whom Jesus had earlier harvested from the earth (cf. Re.14:14-16; page 303). They had gotten the victory over the beast and his image by rejecting the mark of the idol that would have identified them as the property of the Antichrist. They had patiently waited for their redemption even as they had been hunted and systematically martyred by the idol of the Antichrist. Through their deaths, Christ had instantaneously "harvested" them directly into the Heavenly "storehouse" of the redeemed. They now stand upon this flaming crystal sea before God's throne, and they have received within them the joy of the Lord represented metaphorically here as 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"** (Re.15:3).

They sang the song of Moses (cf. Ex.15:1-18), which identifies them as Jews, but they also sang the song of the Lamb (cf. Re.5:8-14) indicat-

ing that they had at long last come to find their ultimate deliverance in their Messiah, Jesus Christ, and in God Almighty, the "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"** (Re.15:4).

This verse speaks of the soon-coming Millennial Age on earth, during which every man and woman redeemed out of every Gentile nation will have a reverential fear of the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and they will make pilgrimages to Jerusalem to honor and worship Him, to learn of Him, and to seek his Judgments that will be carefully taught to them (cf. Ps.86:9).

Seven Angels Come Out of the Temple

> **"And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened"** (Re. 15:5):

We read earlier in Revelation 11:19, just before the secondary narrative had begun in Chapter 12, that the Temple of God had been opened in Heaven.[329] This had come about just after the seventh trumpet had sounded in Revelation 11:15. The phrase "temple of the tabernacle of the testimony," above in verse 5, indicates the Holy of Holies containing the Ark of the covenant, which had been earlier revealed standing within the Temple of God in Heaven.[330]

> **"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"** (Re. 15:6).

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[329]cf. God's Temple in Heaven is Opened, page 263.

[330]cf. The Ark of the Covenant is Revealed, page 263.

It is out of this Heavenly Temple that the seven magnificent angels come forth, fully prepared to administer the seven plagues of God's righteous indignation and wrath upon a world of fully reprobate mankind. The angels are dressed in white linen (indicating their purity and divine intent), and they have their breasts wrapped about with golden sashes. This manner of dress closely associates them with Christ, inasmuch as their vesture is quite similar to that which the Lord Jesus Christ had worn as John had seen Him in his earlier vision as the glorified Christ (cf. Re.1:13-16).

The divine purpose of the seven angels had been previously signaled by the angel who had blown the seventh and last trumpet, constituting this third woe, as we saw back in Chapter 11, verse 15 (cf. page 262). This great event had been immediately heralded by a tremendous outpouring of worship in Heaven, because God had at last taken unto Himself his great sovereign power to exercise his authority over the angry nations who had continually opposed him. His servants, prophets, and saints would soon receive their reward for their faithfulness, even as God will destroy those whose rebellion had led to the destruction of the earth (cf. Re. 11:16-18).

Seven Bowls Filled With God's Wrath

> **"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"** (Re.15:7).

One of the four living creatures that John had seen earlier before God's throne, (cf. Re.4:6-8) gave a "vial" to each of the seven angels. The English word "vial" suggests but a small bottle or ampule. However, the word translated "vials," in this verse is *phialæ* in the Greek text, which carries the meaning of a "broad shallow cup or bowl." "Bowl" is therefore a more accurate translation than the word "vial" as we find it here in the *Authorized King James Version.* Large shallow brass bowls such as these were used in the service of the earthly Temple to collect the blood of the sacrifice; here they contain the wrath of God mixed with the blood of his martyred saints.

> **"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"** (Re.15:8).

The cloud of God's overwhelming presence (cf. Ex.40:34,35) had earlier closed all access to the Heavenly Temple until the seven angels will have fulfilled their deadly mission of delivering God's final judgment upon a reprobate mankind. At this point in time, there is no turning back, for God will have set into motion his final course of action. Those seven powerful angels carry God's death-dealing plagues contained within seven shallow bowls that are soon to be poured down upon the earth with deadly precision. We shall read of God's wrathful judgment being fully executed in terrifying detail as we continue on into the text of Chapter 16. ○

Revelation Chapter 16

In Chapter 15, John saw seven majestic angels come out of the Temple that had been opened in Heaven with the resolute purpose of administering seven final plagues of God's wrath upon the satanic world systems and upon all of those individuals who have the mark of the Antichrist upon them. In this chapter we shall observe those seven angels as they fulfill their deadly mission.

A few of these final plagues appear to be somewhat similar to plagues we have observed before in Scripture – specifically when God sent ten plagues upon Egypt through Moses (cf. Ge, 7:14-12:32) as well as the plagues the earth had more recently suffered in the first four trumpet Judgments. However, the results of these seven final plagues following the sounding of the seventh trumpet will be far more devastating, extensive, and final.

The pouring out of the final wrath of God will take place over a short span of thirty days, which corresponds to the thirty-day period recorded in the prophecy of Daniel (cf. Da.12:11; Illustration 9, page 535), as we have previously discussed in our introduction to Chapter 15 on page 310.

> **"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth"** (Re. 16:1).

The cloud of God's presence had completely filled the Heavenly Temple such that no man could enter into it until all of the angels had fulfilled their mission of divine judgment (cf. Re. 15:8). Therefore, no prayer can be made by any man pleading for reconsideration or further delay. The great voice that John heard coming from out of the Temple commanded the seven angels to go their way to pour out the bowls containing the wrath of God upon the earth. Because all judgment of men has been given by the Father to his Son, that all men should in like manner honor Him (cf. Jn. 5:22,23), the great voice must be more specifical-

ly understood to be the voice of the glorified Christ in his role as judge over the earth.

All of these seven angels will be commanded by Christ's mighty voice to go forth as one to rapidly pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath, each in turn, upon the reprobate populations of the earth. Those seven judgments will be cumulative, each one adding to the terrifying effects of the previous one, and they will affect every earth dweller, all of whom have the mark of the Antichrist upon them. The first six plagues could most likely be poured out with only a few hours or days between them.[331] That rapid activity indicates that Christ is no longer pleading for reprobate man to repent; his righteous judgment of those who have rejected his divine authority is now inescapable.

The First Bowl is Poured Out upon the Earth

> **"And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and** *upon* **them which worshipped his image"** (Re.16:2).

The first plague begins as the first angel tosses out the contents of his bowl upon the earth. The rapid discharge of this first bowl of God's wrath immediately results in noisome and grievous sores breaking out upon all men and women who have the mark of the Antichrist and have worshiped his image.[332]

The word "sores,' as translated from the Greek word *helkos,* describes ulcers or festering skin lesions. The word translated "noisome" here is *kakos* in the Greek, which can be translated as ugly, despicable, or loathsome. The word translated "grievous" is *ponēros* in the Greek, which can be translated as hurtful, painful, and malignant. The first words, *helkos* and *kakos* describes its ugly appearance, while *ponēros*

[331]As before with the seven seals and the seven trumpet judgments, a brief interval exists between the sixth and seventh bowl (cf. Page 325).

[332]cf. The Abomination of Desolation, Commentary page 290.

describes the alarmingly painful effects upon those infected with these sores.

It can be noted that this plague is somewhat similar to the sixth plague, which God had earlier sent upon Egypt, which was also described as "sores or boils" (cf. Ex. 9:8-10); however, in contrast to that former plague, this latter plague will be extremely severe without remission, and it will also be global in expanse.

The Second Bowl is Poured Out Upon the Sea

> **"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"** (Re.16:3).

Even as men are suffering from the first plague, the second angel comes forth. While the first angel had poured his bowl out upon the land directly inflicting the reprobate earth-dwellers with grievous sores from out of the dust of the ground, this second angel discharges the contents of his bowl upon the sea. The Greek word translated "soul" in this verse is *psuchǣ,* which is defined as "breath of life" in general as opposed to *pneuma,* which is defined as a human mortal soul. Therefore, we find that this plague is directed toward sea life of every kind and variety both animate and vegetative.

Today, various coastal areas on earth periodically experience a "red tide," which is caused by abnormally high algae blooms. The waters at first turn yellow and then turn blood red from the death of marine life, and their blood contaminates the shorelines for miles. However, in this verse it must be clearly understood that all of the major oceans and seas will be similarly affected from shore-to-shore world-wide.

No longer will the earth's vast oceans provide food for the world's great population. Dead fish and other marine life will wash ashore in abundance, but their flesh will be putrid and extremely toxic. So severe will the plague be that the oceans will thicken and coagulate like "the blood of a dead man," and the resultant stench will become unbearable

and create a highly toxic atmosphere in which it will be difficult to breathe.

We saw during the second trumpet judgment that only one-third of the earth's seas had been turned to blood (cf. Re. 8:8,9; page 228). However, this plague is universal. It can be seen to be somewhat analogous to the first plague that God sent down upon Egypt wherein the waters of the Nile were turned to blood for a time with similar effects (cf. Ex 7:20-25). That plague was specifically isolated to the Nile for a short period, but this future plague will affect all of the great oceans and seas that encompass the earth's surface throughout the remainder of the five bowl judgments that are yet to come.

The Third Bowl is Poured Out upon Rivers and Springs

> **"And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood"** (Re.16:4).

Rivers and streams have as their source rainfall, mountain water falls, and underground springs from the earth that in turn empty into lakes and reservoirs, thus providing drinking water for the great populations world-wide. Shortly following the second bowl, the third angel will pour out his bowl of God's wrath upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they will likewise become blood. While the second plague upon the oceans and the seas were indeed terrible, this plague is even more catastrophic, inasmuch as there will now be no potable water to drink and no clean water to wash and soothe men's ever-festering sores.

This plague can be compared to the first plague that God sent down upon Egypt. While, the Nile River in that plague had been turned into blood, and the third trumpet had already cut off a third of the earth's water supply, here the entire fresh water source world-wide is turned to blood. Any drinking water that remains could perhaps be found within a few sealed bottles, storage tanks, cisterns – and a few wells for a very

brief time, until the underground water supply also becomes polluted with blood.

> **"[5]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. [6]For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. [7]And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous** *are* **thy judgments"** (Re.16:5-7).

As this plague upon the waters takes place, John hears the angel of the waters (not one of the seven), whose task it has been to oversee and protect the lakes, rivers, and streams, speak out to defend the righteousness of God's judgment sent upon the earth-dwellers through the bloody putrefied waters. This is poetic justice; he emphatically declares that those who have shed the blood of the saints and the prophets deserve to receive blood to drink.

From out of the altar we hear the voice of the martyred saints and prophets echoing the angel's message that God's judgments are true and righteous in sending forth this great plague of blood, which avenges them for their blood that had been shed earlier by those who are now suffering for their evil acts (cf. Re.6:9,10).

The Fourth Bowl is Poured Out upon the Sun

> **"[8]And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. [9]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"** (Re.16:8,9).

The first angel had poured out his bowl upon the earth, while the next two angels had poured out their bowls upon the earth's waters. This

forth angel pours out his bowl upon the sun, which has provided light and energy for all physical life upon the earth.

Following the great Genesis flood, the sun had shown forth brightly in the heavens to produce clouds and manage rainfall upon the earth. As a continuing judgment of the earth, its rays had also produced great and damaging storms, and its unfiltered radiation had shortened mankind's natural lifespan from what was once almost a thousand years down to a nominal threescore and ten.

Since then, the sun's energy has been closely regulated by God within a delicate range for the continuation of life upon the earth. This fourth bowl of God's wrath, which the fourth angel now pours out upon the sun, apparently alters that carefully controlled balance. Perhaps this means that the sun will have begun to go nova, a state wherein much of its material substance is ejected in the form of a cloud, and it becomes far more luminous as it sends forth rays onto the earth that are much hotter than before. The sun's rays are greatly increased so as to scorch men on earth with an intense heat – just as the prophet Malachi had earlier predicted,

> ***"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch"*** (Mal. 4:1).

Instead of repenting and glorifying God, the reprobate men on earth angrily blaspheme Him, even as they suffer from intense heat, because they know that He holds the sovereign responsibility for all of these plagues. In that day, men shall be as stubble standing before the fire of God's wrath, which will utterly consume them, thus leaving them no past, present, or future.

Man's Technological Collapse

It logically follows that we can expect powerful electromagnetic pulses (EMPs) coming forth from the super active sun to suddenly disable man's fully exposed power grids, all wired and wireless means of com-

munication, as well as manufacturing and all forms of mechanized transportation world-wide, as fragile supporting electronic circuitry is literally fried. Orbiting satellites will all go dark, and the Internet will suddenly cease to exist. All computers as well as man's Artificially-Intelligent systems[333] of every kind will completely fail. Robots, which man will most-likely have become highly dependent upon, will cease to function. All personal automobiles and delivery trucks will be disabled,[334] and airplanes will suddenly fall out of the sky. Great commercial cargo ships at sea will be left floating out of port without navigational instruments, as well as any means of propulsion, a consequence that we shall have cause to discuss in greater length when we exposit the text of Chapter 18:17-19 on page 357.

The Fifth Bowl is Poured Out upon the Seat of the Antichrist

> **"[10]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, [11]and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds"** (Re.16:10,11).

This fifth angel pours out his bowl containing God's wrath directly upon the seat of the Antichrist's power, thus plunging Satan's worldwide kingdom into total darkness. Since the sun is still brightly shining and producing intense heat upon the earth as a consequence of the forth

[333]cf. Generative Artificial Intelligence, page 61

[334] Fragile electronic circuitry began to be used extensively within automotive engines and drive-chains with the development of the computerized micro-controller in the 1970s. Therefore, only very old vehicles built before the 1970s along with some simple diesel engines could be expected to be somewhat immune to EMPs. Even so, fuel supplies and the production of spare parts would be adversely affected by those strong pulses, thus greatly limiting their use. Obviously, the fully-computerized modern EV, which is under current development would be rendered completely useless by the sun's great EMPs.

bowl of wrath that was previously poured upon it, this darkness would appear to be an ominous supernatural darkness much as was the dense darkness that had come upon Egypt for three days during the ninth plague (cf. Ex. 10:21-22) – just before ultimate judgment was administered by the angel of death in the tenth plague (cf. Ex,11:4-6).

Just as Pharaoh of old had hardened his heart, the Antichrist as well as all of his enslaved men and women who have his mark upon them will blaspheme God and Heaven for the pain caused by their malignant sores, their unquenchable thirst, and the intense heat of the sun. With hardened hearts, they will defiantly refuse to repent – even as they stubbornly make every effort to carry forth their deeds of iniquity as before.

This kingdom of the beast, i.e, of the political Antichrist, speaks of the great Mystery Babylon of the last days, about which we shall read much more within the text of the parenthetical construct of Chapters 17 and 18 that directly follows this present chapter. In Chapter 17, the great religious harlot of Babylon, will be destroyed by the kings of the earth, inasmuch as God will have put it into their hearts to do so in accordance with his will. In Chapter 18, God will directly destroy all of the commercial holdings of Mystery Babylon of the last days with a great fire coming down from out of Heaven, as the fifth angel pours out his bowl of God's wrath upon the seat[335] of the political Antichrist's power.

The Sixth Bowl is Poured Upon the River Euphrates

> **"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'** (Re.16:12).

[335] The Antichrist's "seat of power" or "throne" could refer to a rebuilt Babylon, which presently lies in ruins in the nation of Iraq; but it more likely refers to Jerusalem, which Satan will have made inhospitable through the earthly reign of his Antichrist. The Antichrist's greater kingdom, Mystery Babylon, will extend outward from his seat of power to encompass the entire earth.

Today, the river Euphrates originates in the mountains of northern Turkey and continues southward roughly 1800 miles to empty out into the Persian Gulf. This ancient river was first mentioned as one of the four rivers flowing out of Eden (cf. Ge.2:14), and it also marked the Eastern boundary of Israel, as God had first offered it to Abraham (cf. Ge.15:18). Over half of this river is navigable today, but it is both deep and wide making it difficult or in some places impossible for large armies to cross on foot.[336]

Due to the intense heat from the sun caused by the fourth angel who had poured his bowl of God's wrath upon it (cf. Re. 16:8), it is conceivable that the Euphrates will have become heavily flooded by rapidly melting ice from the northern mountains, thus acting as a great barrier to all east-west travel, and holding back the vast hoards of peoples from the east that wish to destroy Israel. As this sixth angel pours out his bowl of God's wrath upon this great river, however, it will completely dry up so that the rulers of the eastern oriental nations will then be enabled to send their great armies over it into the land of Palestine.

Interval Between the Sixth and Seventh Bowl

Although the previous five plagues still persist to greatly pain the reprobate of the earth, and mystery Babylon will have been utterly destroyed, a brief interval of time is seen to take place here between this sixth and seventh bowl. This interval exists to allow the massive armies of the east to assemble and prepare to cross over into the northern region of Palestine in an effort to overrun and destroy the city of Jerusalem.

Three Unclean Spirits Go Forth

> **"[13]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.**

[336] With the total disabling of all mechanized means of travel due to great electromagnetic pulses coming forth from the sun as a consequence of the forth angel having poured out his bowl of God's wrath upon it, vast armies in that day must again travel by foot, as in ancient days, with some riding upon horses or perhaps a few horse-drawn wagons or chariots.

> **[14]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"** (Re.16:13,14).

In these two verses, we discover what has seduced the rulers of those great eastern nations to attempt this massive invasion. John makes it clear that these unclean spirits are not literal frogs by his use of the word "like" (i.e. "like frogs").[337] The three unclean spirits quickly leap from the mouths of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. These unclean spirits are the spirits of devils (i.e. demons), who rapidly "leap" from nation to nation, working false miracles and enticing the rulers of the eastern Gentile world to gather together as one great army to mount a massive attack upon Jerusalem. Nevertheless, what this great oriental army will encounter is not a human army protecting Jerusalem but the vast armies of God Almighty led by the returning Christ:

> **"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame"** (Re. 16:15).

Here Jesus warns that He will come upon them unexpectedly, as does a thief under the cover of men's darkness, to lay them bare and expose their great shame.[338] Only those clothed in the righteousness of Christ can avoid being seen as spiritually naked and ashamed when He returns leading the massive army of his redeemed saints.[339] The few remaining saints who were spiritually born in that day after the Church had left the

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[337]It will be noted that Egypt had been infested with frogs within the second plague that God had sent down upon Egypt of old.

[338]The statement regarding Jesus coming as a thief is not a message intended for the Church – nor for that matter has it ever been. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers, "...ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1Th. 5:4,5). Christ's coming will be warmly welcomed by his redeemed who love, expect, and watch for Him within the Rapture, but He will be seen by the reprobate in this future hour as an unexpected and unwelcome thief as He robs them of all the false pride that they had worn in an attempt to cover their iniquity, and in doing so He will have openly laid bare their great shame.

earth are being assured by Jesus that they will not be forgotten during the calamitous wave of destruction that He is about to unleash upon all earth-dwellers – as long as they closely watch and hold tight to the righteous covering of faith that He has so graciously given them.

Preparation Made for the War of Armageddon

In this next verse we find that the earth's armies will be gathered together in one place to engage Christ in a great final conflict:

> **"And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon"** (Re.16:16).

Some question arises about whom the pronoun "he" refers to in this verse. It has been the three demons who have gathered the armies together; since they had jumped as frogs from the mouths of Antichrist, the False Prophet, and Satan. They are united as one in this unholy trinity of iniquity, which had gathered the reprobate of the earth together as one to mount a final attempt to thwart God's sovereign purpose to place Christ upon the throne of the earth. Yet, in a far greater sense, it has been preordained by God who has gathered them together in this [340] place so that He may exercise his great power and might utterly decimate them in this great final conflict.

The solitary place that God has chosen for this great battle is *Har-Megedon* in the Hebrew, which interpreted means the "mount of Megiddo."[341] Inasmuch as we cannot locate any specific place by that name today, it is generally acknowledged that "mount" refers to the high hills surrounding the plain of Megiddo (i.e. the fertile valley of Jezreel and

[339]At this place in this primary narrative, we must again note that the Church had been transported into Heaven within the Rapture some 3 ½ years earlier to be forever with her Lord. Here we find that a massive number of them will be returning to earth within this great army of saints as Christ returns upon a great white horse to decimate his enemies and to establish his Kingdom Age upon the earth.

[340]It will be noted that Egypt had been infested with frogs in the second plague.

[341]Here in the *AKJV* the word *Har-Megedon* has been translated from Hebrew into the Greek form, *Armageddon.*

the plain of Esdraelon) in northern Israel, which is located some 60 miles north of Jerusalem. Somewhere around two hundred battles have already been fought on this wide valley in the past, and now God has chosen it to be the battleground of this great conflict.

While this text provides a purview designating the place for the final conflict; we shall learn still more about the actual battle in Re.19:14-16, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to the earth leading the massive armies of Heaven (cf. The War of Armageddon page 372).

The Seventh Bowl is Poured Out in the Earth's Atmosphere

> **"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"** (Re.16:17).

This great war will be fully over as the seventh angel pours out the last bowl of God's wrath into the atmosphere above the earth. Satan is referred to in Scripture as the "prince of the power of the air" (cf. Ep. 2:2). At this point, God's wrath is directly poured out upon Satan's demonic kingdom. The air will become nearly unbreathable, for it will become extremely toxic and its oxygen content will have been reduced to near zero.

Again we hear the mighty voice of God coming out of the throne from the great Temple in Heaven with three emphatic words "**it is done**."[342] This concluding pronouncement states that mankind who had opposed his authority to reign has been fully judged by Christ within this final great war at Armageddon, thus making way for his return to the earth as its sovereign **King of Kings and Lord of Lords** (cf. Re. 19:16).

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[342]Although not the very same words in the Greek, Jesus had uttered a similar emphatic declaration, "**it is finished**," from the cross when He had completed his work of salvation for the lost human race through his sacrificial death (cf. Jn.19:30).

The Massive Global Earthquake

> **"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"** (Re.16:18).

The "voices and thunders and lightnings" indicate that God is beginning to move in a great and decisive way. The massive earthquake is unlike any that has ever before occurred upon the earth. It will actually shake and encompass the earth (cf. Ha. 3:6; He. 12:26,27). It will be such as to shake the entire earth from pole-to-pole, thus causing massive destruction worldwide, the likes of which men have never before experienced.

> **"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"** (Re.16:19).

There is some question about the identity of "the great city" that will be divided into three parts, for it is not specifically named. Expositors of the Bible are all over the place here. Some say it refers to Babylon, which is mentioned later within this same verse, while many others even say it refers to Rome. However we note that the phrase, "the great city" is only found in one other place within Scripture; in Re. 11:8, "the great city" is "spiritually called Sodom and Egypt,[343] where also our Lord was crucified." Since Jesus was crucified at Jerusalem, we must assume that "the great city" mentioned here is Jerusalem, which in that day had become the seat of the Antichrist that could be accurately equated with sinful Sodom and Egypt of old.

Today, Jerusalem is seen to be spiritually divided into three parts, which are Jew, Muslim, and Christian. Moreover, it is geographically divided into North, South, and West Jerusalem. In the last days, Jerusalem will be physically split into three parts by great rifts caused by the mas-

[343]The reference to Sodom and Egypt refers to the fallen moral and spiritual condition of the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the last days.

sive earthquake of verse 18. Hence, Jerusalem, the seat of the Antichrist, is likely to be the seismic center of that great earthquake.

All of the nations of the earth will have fallen into rubble, and in the midst of all that destruction, God recalls to mind ancient Babylon as it had earlier fallen in the fierceness of his righteous anger. As the Babylon of old, God has likewise ordained this latter-day Babylon to taste of "the wine of the fierceness of his great wrath." [344]

Reconfiguration of the Earth

Even in the midst of all of this destruction, Christ will begin to reconfigure the earth for his return to rule over it for a thousand years.

The Forty-Five Days Preceding the Millennium

The end of this thirty-day period of God's wrath, brings us into a forty-five day period that Daniel had recorded in Da. 12:12.[345] This period provides an interval of deep mourning for the Jews over their earlier crucifixion of Christ, their Messiah. It will as well provide a period of time for Christ's reconfiguration of the earth in preparation for his thousand-year Kingdom Age, which will at long last be established upon the earth. (cf. Revelation Chapter 20). As a consequence of the great earthquake, great changes will begin to take place upon the earth's surface.

> **"And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found"** (Re. 16:20).

During the great flood of Noah's day the earth had been catastrophically altered by the great rushing flood of waters caused by great upheavals in the earth. As the flood waters began to subside, vast mountains had risen up to create deep basins to hold the massive waters that

[344]Babylon's destruction will be discussed in great detail when we move on to study Revelation Chapters 17 and 18.

[345] cf. Illustration 9: Seventy-five Days following the Seventieth Week, page 535.

had earlier completely submerged the earth. In the mountains' wake, dry land again began to emerge around them.[346]

Here we observe Christ beginning to orchestrate a reversal of that earlier catastrophe to return the earth back into its perfect antediluvian configuration in preparation for his coming Kingdom Age. Mountains will flatten down, and Islands that were but the top of undersea mountains will disappear, as the massive continents began to shift back into the singular configuration that it had initially held when God had first organized it as a suitable habitat for Adam and his progeny.

The Final Cleansing of the Earth

> **"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"** (Re. 16:21).

Not every depraved person on earth will have engaged in the great battle at Har-Magedo. Thus, there will still remain a great company of reprobate peoples upon the earth that will have escaped that great massacre. They must also be removed from the earth in preparation for the coming Kingdom Age wherein only righteousness will reign supreme.

We find that to accomplish this, the Lord will send forth a great hail storm out of the heavens. Astonishingly, the weight of each of these hailstones is a "talent," about 100 pounds.[347] Due to the fact that the earth's surface will have been reduced to flattened rubble by the earlier massive earthquake, there will no longer be any natural caves or overhead protections in which the remaining reprobate earth-dwellers can hide. Even as the great hailstones crush them, they will with their last breath blaspheme God for sending down this great judgment upon them! ○

[346] cf. Newsletter Article August 2015.

[347] In the natural sense, we speculate that this barrage of great hailstones may have come about by the disintegration of the great celestial mass that may have been earlier encircling the earth. Hail is made up of ice, which would add credence to the assumption that this great heavenly mass is a massive comet (cf Re.8:10,11; Commentary page 222).

Revelation Chapter 17

Beginning with this chapter, we find that a parenthetical text occurs within the Revelation's primary chronological narrative to expand upon a future Babylon's nonredeemable fallen state, which was previously announced by the second of three flying angels back in Revelation Chapter 14:

> **"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"** (Re. 14:8).

Babylon is in a fallen state because of her fornication with Satan through engaging in his iniquity, and because she had led all of the nations of the world to "drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Ancient Babylon had earlier been weighed in the scales of God's judgment and was found to be so lacking in integrity (cf. Da. 5:27), that she was destroyed by the Persians around the year 478 BC. God consistently equates that ancient Babylon of old with the future satanic global kingdom of the Political Antichrist, which is similarly fallen in her fornication with Satan's iniquity and is thus likewise marked for destruction as the fifth bowl of God's wrath is poured out upon the ruling seat of the Antichrist.[348]

Mystery Babylon

This future Babylon is referred to as a mystery here in Revelation Chapter 17:5. The word mystery is *mustæ rion* in the Greek, which is defined as something that is a secret, which has been kept hidden from view within a deep enigma. The mystery concerning this future enigmatic Babylon of the last days is disclosed here in Revelation Chapters 17 and 18, wherein we are provided with detailed information regarding this future "Mystery Babylon" and her ultimate destruction.

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[348]cf. Re.18:8; The Fifth Bowl is Poured Out upon the Seat of the Antichrist, page 323.

This parenthetical text of Chapters 17 and 18 continues on into Chapter 19 verses 1 thru 5, wherein we are told of the great celebrations that will take place by the holy residents of Heaven when they hear of Babylon's eternal demise. The main chronological narrative of the Revelation will then resume in Chapter 19:6 with text concerning the marriage supper of the Lamb, which will take place on earth as Christ returns with his beloved Church to establish his Millennial Kingdom.

Global Emplacement of Mystery Babylon

We know with absolute certainty that all nations will one day be absorbed into a one-world political system under the rule of Satan's Antichrist, but speculation abounds concerning the possible location of any future "city" of Babylon. Some say Babylon will be reconstructed in Iraq, where the ruins of ancient Babylon presently exist. Some believe it will be located in Geneva, the present seat of the European Union. Some think that it will be located in Rome, wherein the Antichrist will merely assume the seat of an already fully corrupted Roman Catholicism. Others say that future Babylon could be any one of the many other major cities of the world – perhaps the city of New York within the *United States of America*, after her present religious, moral and political decline will have caused her ultimate collapse into a state of nonredeemable iniquity.[349]

Still others have ventured to say that this future Babylon will be a fully corrupted Jerusalem. There is certainly ample Scriptural evidence for Jerusalem being the seat of the Antichrist's global reign; since for a period of time, he will have brazenly declared himself to be God – symbolized by an abominable idol of desolation[350] standing within the Holy of Holies of a mendacious Third Temple within Jerusalem.[351]

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[349]cf. Preamble to the Revelation, page 31.

[350]cf. The Abomination of Desolation, pages 290 and 547.

[351]cf. 2Th2:4; Addendum Article, Third Temple of the Last Days, page 516.

Nevertheless, we must accept the fact that this broader term, "Mystery Babylon," does not refer to a mere city or city-state; nor will it be a larger nation-state. The Babylon spoken of here in the Revelation must be more correctly understood as a satanic concept embodying an evil world system, which is essentially a great global megalopolis rather than one individual city, for its influence and power will blanket the entire surface of the earth.

The Two Faces of Mystery Babylon

As we shall discover, Mystery Babylon will have two faces or major aspects. The first will be a satanic religious face, and the second will be an idolatrous commercial face. The future Babylon spoken of here in the Revelation will not only be an evil satanic religious system, but also a corrupt commercial system whose dealings will be greatly controlled and enforced through the mark of the beast (cf. Re.13:16,17).

These are not two different Babylons, but are two expressions of the same deplorably evil system within which Satan will dominate the entire earth through his Political Antichrist and his False Prophet, both of whom we earlier read about in Chapter 13. Here in Chapter 17, the evil religious aspect of this future Babylon headed up by the False Prophet will be addressed, while its idolatrous commercial aspect headed up by the Political Antichrist will become the focus of Chapter 18.

The Religious Harlot of Babylon

There are currently two basic interpretations of the mendacious religious aspect of Babylon set forth by various Bible expositors: 1) Babylon represents the fully apostate ecumenical church of the last days; and 2) Babylon is a conglomeration of all false religions combined into one religious system. There is an element of commonality to be found within both of those interpretations as we shall observe.

Since its inception by Nimrod unto this present day, Babylon can be recognized as the primary source of all false religion throughout the

world.[352] Although Babylon represents every form of false religion, the apostate ecumenical church of the last days will initially play a major role in the prostitution of the Truth in its effort to encourage the unification of all false religions into its singular corrupt form of churchianity.

We ascertained back in Chapter 7 verse 9 that even as the true Church was Raptured from the earth into the air to be with Christ in Heaven, a still-functioning apostate church was left behind upon the earth. The False Prophet[353] was immediately called forth by Satan to reorganize the remaining apostate church, along with all other false religious systems, into one unified religious system specifically fashioned to worship the Political Antichrist (cf. Re. 13:11-15; page 287) – and thus indirectly to worship Satan Himself.

The future religious harlot of Babylon spoken of here in Chapter 17 will most likely represent a conglomeration of ancient goddess-religions, a fully corrupt Roman Catholicism, a liberalized ritual Islam, every conceivable religious cult, as well as an apostate Protestant church that had once held the True Church captive within her perfidious churchianity.[354] In assembling this corrupt aggregation of all false religions into one religious system, the False Prophet will have in effect restored the satanic religion of ancient Babylon, fully revitalized, unified, and perpetuated over the entire surface of the earth.

With the above description of Mystery Babylon as a preliminary summary, we shall now begin a verse-by-verse exposition of the inspired text of Revelation Chapter 17, wherein we shall discuss her religious aspect in greater detail:

God's Appraisal of the Great Harlot

"[1]And there came one of the seven angels which had

[352]cf. Addendum Article, Babylon, the Satanic Root of False Religion, page 589.

[353]cf. The Second Beast – the False Prophet, page 287; *CRC* Book III, page 605.

[354]At this point in time the True Church will have been removed from the earth within the Rapture to be with Christ. (cf. Addendum Article, The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church, page 492).

> **the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters [2]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"** (Re,17:1,2).

The Apostle John is approached by one of the seven angels that holds what we could assume to be the fifth bowl containing God's wrath, which he is preparing to pour out upon the seat of the Antichrist. The angel first sought to show John the "judgment of the great whore." The "great whore" (Greek *porne* = an idolatrous harlot), with "whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication," could be alluding to the ancient mystery religions headed up by Semiramis[355] along with a long line of other ancient goddesses of similar vile reputations. The kings of the earth as well as the earth's great population of that day, represented as sitting on many waters (cf. verse 15 below), had paid her homage and had become intoxicated with her vile acts of fornication.

Nevertheless, as we shall discover in the text that follows, this "great whore" of which the angel is speaking is a metaphor representing something far worse than the ancient goddesses orchestrating their sex-infused religious practices in that long-ago age. He is speaking of Mystery Babylon as the great spiritual harlot that has ultimately seduced the entire world with her wicked religious lies.

Unholy Alliance of the Great Harlot with the Antichrist

> **"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"** (Re.17:3).

[355] Semiramis and her ancient religion was discussed in a Newsletter Article of March 2013 in connection with the modern-day pagan celebration of Easter.

John again makes it clear that he was carried away "in the spirit" by the angel through a great extensive expanse of time and space (i.e. a vast wilderness) whereupon he saw a "woman" sitting upon a scarlet colored beast. John had earlier seen another "woman," who had represented Israel as she was about to bring forth the Messiah and true religion into the world (cf. Re.12:1,2; page 267). In complete contrast, this second "woman" that he saw is the brazen spiritual harlot spoken of in verse 1 of this chapter, who metaphorically symbolizes all of the false religions of the world that oppose God and his Christ.

The disgraceful beast, having seven heads and ten horns, upon which the harlot sits is the Antichrist (cf. Re.13:1), whom as we have already seen is filled with every imaginable form of blasphemy (cf. Re. 13:6).

Description of the Idolatrous Harlot of Babylon

> **"[4]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: [5]and upon her forehead** *was* **a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH"** (Re.17:4,5).

The corrupt ecumenical apostate church that had denied Christ, and had thus remained upon the earth following the Rapture of the true Church, had earlier established a symbiotic relationship with the Antichrist as he came to power. Her power and notoriety will increase along with that of the Antichrist, inasmuch as she essentially "rides upon his back."

This corrupt "woman" of the last days has "Mystery Babylon" emblazoned upon her forehead, which metaphorically identifies her as being the ultimate manifestation of all the ancient religions of Babylon. She is correctly identified as the "mother of harlots," since she has given birth to all of the abominable false religions to be found upon the earth. Thus, there are many false religions and cults today that deny God and his

Christ along with various other corruptions of biblical Christianity that have prostituted the Truth. In that day, all of those false religions will be combined as one under the False Prophet. This will be a fully functional "anti-Church" that exclusively worships the Antichrist.

The Roman Catholic Church as a Type

A paradigm of this metaphoric woman, as a false church, is even now recognizable within the enigmatic *Roman Catholic Church* of the past, and which yet remains even in our day. In the past, many men have sought to identify one or more of the more powerful Popes with the future Antichrist.[356] The purple color with which this brazen "woman" is arrayed was formerly the color worn by Roman nobility, and scarlet is the primal color worn by Cardinals of the Roman church. The golden cup in her hand, which is "full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication," speaks of the blasphemous practice of Roman Catholic priests allegedly calling the risen Jesus Christ down out of Heaven to be repeatedly sacrificed within the Eucharist of the Roman Catholic mass, wherein Christ's "blood" is purportedly consumed by her priests from a golden chalice:

> **"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"** (Re. 17:6).

We find that this brazen "woman" has become drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus. All forms of false religion hate the Truth and seek every means to destroy those who hold to that Truth, quite often resorting to bloodshed. Historically, the corrupted Roman church of the middle ages persecuted and killed many devout Jews, here identified as "the saints," as well as having been directly responsible for the cruel and painful martyrdom of many of the true followers of the

[356]This identification is certainly true as to type; however, the all-powerful Antichrist of the last days has not yet appeared to reign over the entire earth.

Lord Jesus Christ during the great struggle of the *Protestant Reformation Movement*.[357]

So evil and savage was this "woman" in the past and within this future ecumenical manifestation of the apostate anti-Church of the Antichrist, that it caused John to wonder with great astonishment about her insatiable appetite for innocent blood.

> **"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"** (Re.17:7).

The angel, apparently perplexed by John's puzzled amazement, begins to reveal the mystery within the vision of the woman and the beast that had "seven heads and ten horns." John recorded this revelation for our edification in the verses that follow:

Mystery of the Beast Disclosed

> **"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"** (Re.17:8).

As we have previously noted, a "beast" in Scripture represents a wicked chaotic kingdom and its savage head, which are in direct opposition to God. Here we are faced with what at first appears to be a conundrum. This beast that John saw, upon which the great Harlot rode, "was, and is not, and yet is."

> **"[9]And here** *is* **the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. [10]and there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is,** *and* **the other is not yet come; and when he**

[357]cf. *CRC* Book III, The Counter Reformation Effort, pages 263 thru 268.

cometh, he must continue a short space" (Re.17:9,10).

By saying "here is the mind which hath wisdom," the angel is implying that this apparent conundrum requires spiritual understanding given by God in order to comprehend its true meaning. The angel then begins to untangle the conundrum for John. First, the angel explains that the seven heads of the beast are seven mountains. The word "mountains" is translated from an obsolete Greek word *oros* which means "to rise above." In turn, that obsolete word is derived from *hopou,* which means a particular place or spot. Put altogether they can be translated to mean "a high or risen place" or metaphorically a high risen kingdom. Therefore, the angel is saying that these "heads" are seven "high places" upon which the mysterious woman resides.[358]

The "high places" are related to "seven kings" five of whom are fallen, while one is, and the other is not yet come." In Revelation 13:1 we saw that the Antichrist had seven heads upon which were written the name of blasphemy. We had determined that those seven heads represented the leaders of six great empires, which were the Pharaoh of Egypt, Sennacherib of Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Cyrus of Medo-Persia, Alexander of Greece, Caesar Augustus of Rome, and lastly, the future seventh world empire headed up by the Antichrist. That interpretation is borne out by the very next verse.

Antichrist, the Seventh and Eighth Head

> **"And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition"** (Re.17:11).

In the text found in Revelation 13, John saw that the Antichrist had received a fatal wound; but the deadly injury was miraculously healed:

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[358]Many have interpreted this phrase to mean that the "woman" (the harlot) is the *Roman Catholic Church* which currently resides in the Roman Vatican. Rome is of course built upon seven hills – for which it is renown. However, that interpretation would appear to be far too narrow for the current context inasmuch as the great harlot of the last days will be made up of every imaginable false religion – including a totally apostate Protestantism.

> **"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"** (Re.13:3).

In our commentary on this verse found on page 283, we concluded that a demon out of the bottomless pit, whose ultimate destiny was Perdition (i.e. the lake of fire), had either replaced the Antichrist (assuming he had actually died), or had come to indwell him as he reappeared upon the scene. This can be seen to comprise "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is" of verse 8 above.

Therefore, this seventh beast, the political Antichrist, that "was and is not" also constitutes the eighth world ruler in his reappearance following the healing of his deadly head wound. His character had at that time been greatly altered by the demon from the abyss who came to indwell him. Nevertheless, in the ordinary sense, the Antichrist is still the same earlier world ruler who was the last of the seven. Both of these satanic manifestations of the Antichrist must ultimately go together as one into perdition (i.e. into Hell, within the lake of fire; cf. Re.19:20;20:10).

The Regimes of Antichrist's Ten Regions

> **"[12]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. [13]These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast"** (Re.17:12,13).

Having revealed the meaning behind the seven heads, the angel now addresses the ten horns (cf. Re.17:7). The ten horns represent ten kings who have not yet received their kingdoms. Their titles and realms will be given to them by the Antichrist as he comes to power. Their realms are most likely ten vast regions of the earth. Those ten kings will with one mind pledge their sole allegiance to the Antichrist. Hence, the power that they have obtained will be at the disposal of the Antichrist to enforce his edicts and maintain his rule worldwide.

Nevertheless, their power as kings is said to last but "one hour." Hour in the Greek text is *hœ̄ra,* which can literally mean one hour or can be used figuratively to mean a relatively short period of time, as is its most probable meaning here. Their dominions will be very brief for,

> **"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" (Re.17:14).**

These ten kings will be incited by the three demons, who as metaphorical "frogs" had leaped out of the mouth of Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet, to engage against God and his Christ in the great war of Armageddon (cf. Re. 16:13-16; page 325). This great slaughter of the earth dwellers will promptly end in total defeat of those ten great satanic armies by the forces of the "called, and chosen, and faithful" of the Raptured Church (cf. Re, 19:14; Mt.22:14), who will be led by Jesus Christ, the unchallenged "**King of Kings and Lord of Lords**" (cf. Re. 19:16).

Destruction of Babylon's Religious Harlot

> **"And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues"** (Re.17:15).

The angel tells John that the "waters" upon which the great harlot sat (cf. Re.17:1) was in fact being used as a metaphor for a multitude of peoples, living in many nations, and speaking many languages. This blasphemous satanic religion had grown to become an unchallenged world-wide religion of all reprobate earth-dwellers without exception.

> **"[16]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. [17]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"** (Re.17:16,17).

It was inevitable that the religious edicts of the great harlot's religion would eventually clash with the political and commercial aspirations and activities of the ten regional kings and their great populations, such that the anger of the kings was stirred up against her. All false religions are intent upon promoting themselves, seeking power and control, while amassing great material wealth extracted from their subjects (cf. Re. 17:4). This harlot religion of the last days will most likely have been used to acquire great wealth to build great temples and palaces for their own aggrandizement – much as did the *Roman Catholic Church* in a previous age.

The False Prophet had used this harlot church to unify the reprobate of the earth to worship the Antichrist, but Instead of worshiping the Antichrist she soon only worshiped herself.[359] Here it is said that the ten kings "shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." This highly figurative language emphasizes the extreme violence and vast extent of her destruction. She will be stripped of all her wealth, absorbed by her own greed, her religious places of worship will be burned to the ground.

In verse 17 we find that God had put it in the hearts of these future kings to yield to Him in fulfilling his divine will (cf. Re.19:2) when they destroyed the satanic religion of Babylon. They had given their total allegiance and power over to the political Antichrist – until the prophetic Word of God is fulfilled in Babylon's final destruction.

> **"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth"** (Re.17:18).

The "great city" presented to John here in this vision was earlier presented as an adulterous blood-thirsty woman representing the religious structure of Babylon whose seat of power was ensconced within a fallen Jerusalem. Religious Babylon had reigned over the kings of the earth, until she had eventually become hated and was utterly destroyed by her

[359]Sadly, many of today's churches, puffed up with corporate pride, worship themselves rather than Christ whose namesake they deny by their actions. This same prideful desire to make a name for themselves will likewise cause the apostate church of the last days to abandon their worship of the Antichrist to their imminent peril.

once-loyal subjects. What remains on earth after the apostate church's demise is a fully secular commercial Babylon, which is a one-world system unencumbered by any vestige of religion that is so diligently sought after by today's humanist globalists.

Yet, commercial Babylon will not long endure; God will deal with this corrupted commercial Babylon, as He had the religious Harlot whom it had destroyed. ○

Revelation Chapter 18

As we stated within our commentary on Chapter 17, the Mystery Babylon of the last days is better understood to be a satanic global megalopolis, a massive city whose broad emplacement and religious and commercial influence will extend over the entire earth.[360] In this chapter, we shall observe God's total devastation of a fully secularized commercialized Babylon through a massive fire coming down from out of the heavens. This devastation will come about on the very same day that the religious harlot of Babylon will have been burned with fire by the regional kings of the earth (cf. Re.17:16; page 342); thus for a very brief time, giving the accumulated wealth of the kingdom of the religious harlot over to the overwhelming commercial kingdom of the political Antichrist (cf. Re.17:17).

Commercialism

Commerce can be defined as a legitimate enterprise having the primary objective of supplying necessary goods and services to the general population. Nevertheless, Commercialism is better defined as the maximizing of profit at the expense of the quality of goods and services sold, which exchanges are erroneously being misrepresented as quality transactions. This would include items that men are attracted to, but are actually harmful to them. Those would include tobacco products and a wide range of drugs that adversely affect men both physically and mentally. Some of this merchandise is cleverly designed so as to lead men and women astray into a life of habitual sin.

Much of the demand for faulty and harmful merchandise is based upon a fictitious market that is cleverly created by the manufacturer of the goods where none had existed before. It is in that sense that many nations have gone astray of God's Law through the expansion of legitimate Commerce into Commercialism, in which they are blatantly dis-

[360]cf. Global Emplacement of Mystery Babylon on page 333 of our commentary on Revelation Chapter 17.

obeying God's commandment, clearly stating, "thou shalt not steal," (cf. Ex, 20:15). Moreover, this theft is accomplished through a false witness concerning a product's true value (cf. Ex. 20:16). While many nations today have consumer protection laws against the most egregious of those transactions, the Babylon of the last days will fully embrace Commercialism to the greatest extent imaginable through the mark of the beast.

The Idolatry Associated with Commercialism

The evils of Commercialism are not just associated with the sellers of poor quality goods that are being represented as having superior value. When carried to an extreme, Commercialism amounts to idolatry through men's worship of worthless material things, and the worship of corrupt or even immoral technology, instead of God, who alone is worthy of man's worship. Most all of the things upon which we falsely place value today will be filling the junkyards within a few short decades or less, while our God lives on forever.

God defined idolatry as the worship of anything that supposes to renounce his sovereign authority and infinite worth by attributing it to something that He has made, or that man has made out of materials that God had provided for their benefit. Thus, He commanded Israel saying,

> ***"Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness*** *of any thing* ***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"*** (Ex.20:3-5);

God is jealous of man's worship, and rightly so, since He is their sole Creator and provider. Thus, Israel was prohibited from imagining in mind, or fabricating in substance, any physical representations of his di-

vine being. Inasmuch as God is an invisible spirit, any and all such representations of Him are absolutely blasphemous.[361]

The Covetousness Embedded within Commercialism

God also defined human covetousness to Israel as follows,

> ***"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's"*** (Ex.20:17).

Here we discover that covetousness not only refers to the envy or coveting of material things such as a house, but also animals, and human servants; to lust after a neighbor's wife is especially evil for it constitutes virtual adultery (cf. Ex.20:14; Mt. 5:28).[362] The range of man's covetousness is quite wide to the extent that it is impossible for a fallen man to dismiss it as a passing thought, for he greatly desires to act upon that mental impulse.

Covetousness is an elusive sin that is deeply embedded within Commercialism, such that it is nearly impossible for any man to avoid encountering it. Even the Apostle Paul had stated that he would not have known that lust existed in his mind, apart from God's Law that had expressly stated that "Thou shalt not covet" (cf. Ro.7:7).

Babylon's Extreme Commercialism

Commercialism in all of its most-negative aspects will reach its apogee within the Babylon of the last days – especially so since no commercial transactions can take place anywhere without the mark of

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[361]Man was originally created in the image of God (cf. Ge. 1:27). After Adam's fall, however, sinful men denied God's divine act of creation; and in so doing, they besmirched themselves, the fallen image of God. Denying their divine origin, they have come to hate God, thus causing Him to gather together all of the iniquity of the fathers to enter into their children unto the third and fourth generation.

[362]This is why attractive women are often chosen to entice men to buy certain personal products in Television commercials.

the Antichrist who will be ruling over the earth from Jerusalem.[363] This mark will be strictly enforced by an artificially intelligent computerized system, central of which is the diabolical Abomination of Desolation,[364] through which the political Antichrist receives worship.

We shall discover, as we proceed further into this 18th chapter of the Revelation, that coveted things in that day will range in value from very small insignificant trinkets to the very lives and immortal souls of reprobate men and women (cf. 18:12,13). Materialism will dominate men's lives to the extent that they will idolize and worship earthly things that have been made with men's hands, which they can see, experience, feel, and handle through their physical senses.

Men will have become so preoccupied with the material that they will become totally ignorant of the existence of God, who as a life-giving Spirit has given man his very life and breath. In that day, men will be without thanks or regard for any of God's more-excellent spiritual gifts – the chief of which is Jesus Christ, the Son of his very being, who through his atoning death had restored eternal life to so many of the spiritually dead.

Exposition of the Evils of Commercial Babylon

As we begin our study of Chapter 18, the religious harlot of Babylon that had hindered commercial Babylon and her extreme secularism is but ashes. However, Babylon's great commercial holdings still remain and greatly thrive after the harlot's demise.

> **"[1]And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. [2]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"** (Re,18:1,2).

[363]cf. The Mark of the Antichrist, page 291.

[364] cf. The Abomination of Desolation, page 290.

"After these things" found at the beginning of verse 1, refers to the fifth in a series of seven bowls of God's wrath that were poured out in Chapter 16 (cf. page 323), which had immediately led to the events of Chapter 17 in which the great harlot, the satanic religious system of Babylon, was destroyed by her secular enemies.

John then saw another powerful angel come down out of Heaven. The previously darkened earth (cf. Re. 16:10; page 323) will suddenly be illuminated by this angel's radiant light. The religious darkness of Babylon that had hidden her sin is now fully exposed by that light. The Greek word for "another" is *allos* in the Greek, which means another angel of the same kind, but with a certain distinction.

With a mighty voice this angel shouted out that "Babylon is fallen." This is the same words that John had previously heard announced by another angel back in Revelation 14:8. That angel's message had referred to the fallen state of the religious harlot of Babylon, but the message of this second angel, repeating that of the first, now refers to the nonredeemable fallen state of this future Babylon that will lead to her immanent destruction. It will not come from within Babylon itself, as did the destruction of the religious harlot, but from out of Heaven as a direct judgment from God.

After the demise of Babylon's religious harlot, the great commercial Babylon had remained the habitat of demons, the place of every loathsome spirit, and a sanctuary for every detestable human vulture that had previously roosted within the institutionalized religion of Babylon. It may well be that all of the demons that had been previously released from the great abyss in Revelation 9:1-11 had gathered together to reside within this vast commercial megalopolis. Men and women who had survived the four earlier trumpet judgments, had continued on in the evil works of their hands, through which they had continued to worship demons represented by material idols made of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood. They had continued on in their murderous acts, black arts of sorcery, and massive thefts, along with their collective fornication with commercial Babylon (cf. Re.9: 20,21).

"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"** (Re,18:3).

For many centuries, the rulers of the nations on earth had engaged in Babylon's blasphemous religious activities, such that all of the peoples on earth had been forced to drink of the intoxication of her fornication and had suffered much from the wrath of her demented persecutions. All the while, the "merchants" (Greek, *emporos* = "traveling tradesmen") of the earth had become enriched by supplying this religious harlot with her sinful material opulence.

There is a great amount of money to be made in marketing the trappings of religion, and especially so in marketing false religion. While the great wealth of the *Roman Catholic Church*, both past and present, can be seen as a primary example of this material opulence, we find many additional examples of this overindulgence and abuse in many of the world's religious structures, larger cults, and isms, in the past and even today. Sadly, we also find this same desire for opulence and commercialism existing to an increasing measure within the progressively decadent churchianity of today's apostate Protestantism.[365]

God Warns his People to Flee Out of Babylon

> **"[4]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. [5]For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities"** (Re.18:4,5).

This voice from Heaven is the voice of God Almighty, who for past millennia has been calling for his people not to partake of the sins of the false commercialized doctrines of Babylon, but to separate themselves

[365]Protestant evangelicalism of today is effectively selling a false "gospel" of prosperity and corrupt social works to an unsaved population in exchange for their material substance.

from her iniquity so that they need not suffer from the plagues owed to her for her evil works. For,

> ***"[16]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. [17]Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean*** *thing*; ***and I will receive you, [18]and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"*** (2Co. 6:16-18).

Those who are called out of Babylon are the redeemed, whom God will have called out to separate themselves from her sinful Commercialism, so that they need not suffer the terrible plagues that must ultimately befall her in the last days. (cf. Re.18:4,5). For, within the hour in which Commercial Babylon is to be judged, God will instruct the fifth angel to pour out the contents of the fifth bowl of his divine wrath upon all who remain within Commercial Babylon (cf. Re.16:10,11).

Babylon to Receive Her Just Reward

Although commercialized Babylon's ultimate physical judgment had not been immediate, God has not forgotten her perverseness and her many iniquities, as is revealed in the verses of this inspired text that follows:

> **"[6]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. [7]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"** (Re.18:6,7).

We commonly think of a reward as something beneficial and gratifying, but that is not the meaning here. Here "reward" is translated from the Greek word *apodidōmi,* which means to recompense or to pay back in kind. (cf. Ex.22:7,9).[366] Now, Babylon must receive her just recompense, which is double all that she had perpetrated upon her unwitting subjects. In exchange for her false self-glorification, she shall be severely tormented and greatly humbled.

While she had once seen herself as a queen, and not in any way like a poor widow, she shall now be brought low and suffer ruin, extreme poverty; and her sorrow is twice that she had earlier conferred upon others in exchange for her once opulent lifestyle. Since Babylon has been the source of nothing but evil works, which have deceived and tormented her unwitting subjects to their continual sorrow, this "reward" will be poetic justice indeed.

God's Utter Devastation of Commercial Babylon

> **"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"** (Re.18:8).

Babylon's judgment shall come upon her quite suddenly as a blinding flash of light in which she shall instantly suffer mourning, famine and death – quite literally in one day's time, as the fifth bowl of God's wrath is hurled down upon Babylon by the fifth angel.[367]

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[366]The idea of paying back double is an Old Testament concept, wherein an offender was required to restore that which has been taken plus an additional amount equal to that which was restored. In Luke 19:8, we find that the rich but repentant publican, Zacchaeus, pledged double that requirement by offering to recompense fourfold anything he had taken from any man by false accusation.

[367]cf. The Fifth Bowl is Poured Out upon the Seat of the Antichrist, page 323.

As the Kings of the earth earlier that same day had burned the false religious institutions of Babylon with fire (cf. Re.17:16), so will the vast commercial holdings of Babylon, which had inherited the harlot's misbegotten wealth, be burned to the ground within a great raging fire – a fire sent down from Heaven at the command of the sovereign Lord God. The "Lord God" must be understood to refer to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who claims his rightful place as her almighty judge.

Lamentation of the Kings of the Earth

> **"[9]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, [10]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"** (Re,18:9,10).

As the Antichrist's great commercial districts are destroyed, those of high rank and position in her governance who have engaged in her criminal activities, her rank fornication with unclean things, and those who have shared in her opulence, will utterly abandon her. They will lament her destruction at what they hope is a safe distance for fear of sharing in her great torment. Through the brilliant light radiated from the angel that now illuminates the earth (cf. Re.18:1), they observe the smoke rise up out of her burning from afar off and lament and cry out in great agony, "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city![368] for in one hour is thy judgment come."

Babylon had apparently survived the seven trumpet judgments and even the first four bowl judgments through the power of demons, and it had appeared to be invincible; but now as the fifth bowl of God's judg-

[368]The massive megalopolis of Babylon whose commercial holdings encompass the earth is repeatedly referred to as a great or massive "city" within the texts of Chapter 18.

ment is poured out,[369] her destruction is both swift and absolute. Her final destruction has suddenly taken place in one hour of one day!

Lamentation of the Earth's Merchants

> **"And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more"** (Re.18:11):

As did the kings of the earth who had cried out in their great agony, the traveling tradesmen who had engaged in commerce and shipping and had depended upon Babylon for their livelihood, also weep and mourn over her destruction. Not that they care so much about the megalopolis itself, but because along with its destruction there is no one remaining to trade with them any longer. Their expensive merchandise suddenly becomes worthless, and the traders' shipping and delivery enterprise will collapse, thus leaving them with a vast inventory of unmarketable merchandise most likely in transit aboard huge ocean-going container ships.[370]

The Astonishing Range of Merchandise

> **"[12]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, [13]and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and**

[369]cf. The Fifth Bowl is Poured Out upon the Seat of the Antichrist, page 323.

[370]Much of today's worldwide inventory of parts and goods does not reside in great nearby warehouses, but are contained instead within a supply chain consisting of massive ocean-going container ships. Products and goods are scheduled to arrive in time for their use in manufacturing or for immediate delivery to the end consumer, thus virtually eliminating warehouse costs. The utilization of this floating inventory is commonly referred to as "Just-in-time Manufacturing" and "Just-in-time Inventory." Any serious interruption to this massive flotilla is calamitous to commercialism.

frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men" (Re, 18:12-13).

Here we find listed an astonishing array of items that had constituted Babylon's extreme opulence. First listed is Jewelry made of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls. Second listed is the fine garments worn by its governors that were made of fine linen with purple dye and silk with scarlet dye. Third listed is decorations made of thyine wood (Greek, *thuinos* – a fragrant citrus wood). Forth listed is fine eating and drinking utensils made of precious wood, brass, iron, and marble. Even exotic flavorings such as cinnamon as well as various fragrances and ointments such as frankincense that were once highly valued had now become worthless. Vast stockpiles of cooking ingredients such as wine, oil, fine flour, and wheat that had been stored up have been consumed by the fire of her devastation in a mere moment. Livestock, and "chariots" (i.e. various means of personal transportation) once highly treasured are no more.

Marketing of Human Slaves and souls of Men

Last but not least mentioned are slaves and the souls of men. Even in today's world the inhumane trafficking of the bodies of living men, women, and children is considered a valuable commodity within massive clandestine operations that are abundant, yet are mostly hidden from general view. In the last days of commercial Babylon, human trafficking will have become commonplace, and although thereby fully exposed as the great evil that it is, it will become an open market that is visible to all. Children in particular will be in high demand as birthrates will have continued to dramatically fall;[371] babies and young children will be sold at great price to childless lesbians, male homosexuals, and deviant pedophiles. Both women and men as well as children will be sold into a life of prostitution and pornography to satisfy the insatiable desires perpetuated by the earlier sexual revolution that will have

[371] cf. Preamble, The Rapidly Declining Birthrate, page 47.

reached its final state of depravity within Mystery Babylon of the last days.[372]

In having done so, the immortal souls of men, women, and children have been stolen from them, as they must adjust to a depraved immoral lifestyle, thus rendering them reprobate for God's great eternal purposes.

> **"And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all"** (Re.18:14).

At this point in time, Babylon the great, which had once held captive the souls of men world-wide, no longer exists. The evil fruits of illicit pleasure that men had lusted for are no more. As to the extended kingdom of the Antichrist across the entire earth, everything that had once been valued by its reprobate citizenry has vanished along with the fiery destruction of all its massive commercial districts.

> **"[15]The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, [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"** (Re.18:15,16)!

The merchants along with the tradesmen that we saw in verse 11, continue to stand off at a great distance while weeping and wailing for fear that the rich residents' torment will also befall them. They stand in great awe of the sudden destruction of that great commercial municipality that had purchased and worn rich and colorful garments and decorations that they had previously sold to the reprobate as a sign of their supposed power and what they had been assumed to be their impermeable position.

Lamentation of Ship-masters and Crewman

> **"[17]For in one hour so great riches is come to naught.**

[372] cf. Preamble, The Delusive Sexual Revolution on page 44.

> **And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, [18]and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What** *city is* **like unto this great city! [19]And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate"** (Re,18:17-19).

Every ship's master along with the many crewman under their command dared not even approach any commercial port, but remained afar off at sea and cried out when they saw the smoke from the burning of their great commercial buildings and infrastructure. They are struck dumb by the fact that the commercial city's great riches had in the end availed them absolutely nothing. Moreover, many of those ships are trapped within stagnant waters, due to the pouring out of the second bowl of God's wrath upon the sea (cf. page 319); as well as the the loss of their necessary navigation and propulsion systems, as the consequence of the fourth bowl of wrath that had been poured out upon the sun (cf. page 321).[373]

Sailors who had once engaged in the great megalopolis' corrupt immoral activities "cast dust upon their heads" in their humiliation, and there was heard a great outcry along with their weeping and wailing for the lost anticipation of their raucous shore-leaves. Their captains joined them in their dismay wailing, "alas, alas," for the loss of the city that had made them and their masters rich through its overindulgence in great material possessions.

Great Rejoicing Heard in Heaven

> **"Rejoice over her,** *thou* **heaven, and** *ye* **holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her"** (Re.18:20).

[373]cf. Man's Technological Collapse, page 322.

The mournful lament heard upon the earth is in complete contrast with the great joy that is heard in Heaven. The Holy Apostles along with the prophets of old will spontaneously rejoice over the destruction of Babylon, as all of Heaven erupts in sounds of great overwhelming joyousness. Truth has at last prevailed and false religion has been exposed for what it had always been – unmitigated evil. At last, God has avenged the persecution and martyrdom of his Holy Prophets who had spoken his Word on earth, and of the Apostles of Christ who in spite of persecution had spread the Golden Gospel to the ends of the earth.

> **"And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast *it* into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all** (Re. 18:21).

A mighty angel lifts up a huge stone and throws it into the sea, which makes a great loud splash, but then immediately sinks below the waves to be seen no more. This is symbolic of Babylon that had once boasted of being a great prestigious megalopolis; but now is suddenly thrown down in great violence to be buried under the fiery waters of God's wrathful judgment to be seen no more.

> **"[22]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; [23]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"** (Re.18:22,23).

Babylon's megalopolis was once viewed as the merriest place on the earth, but it was also a very sinful place. It had excelled as the entertain-

ment capitol of the world both within its great halls and upon its streets.[374] Now with its demise, the singers, performers, flutists and trumpeters had fallen silent to be heard no more. Skilled craftsmen that had once occupied her many shops are gone, and its great mills, which had once produced fine flour and other exquisite foodstuff are silent. The bright lights that had once lit her broad streets and avenues are now dark – not even the light of a single candle can be seen.

No more does marriage and giving in marriage, which had become but a parody of the once sacred union between a man and a woman, take place. Family life has come to an abrupt end and with it all civil society. The aristocratic rulers of the city were the evil merchants of sin who through their demonic seduction, magic, and sorcery had deceived the entire earth to worship Satan through their wide dissemination of countless false religions now lay silent to be heard no more.

Blood of Prophets and Saints Found in Babylon's Ruins

> **"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth"** (Re.18:24).

This once great city of Babylon was the murderer of God's people; the blood of the Saints, of the Prophets, and of all other godly men that had been slain upon the earth was found in her smoldering ruins. Thus has their blood been avenged; inasmuch as Babylon is now dead and shall live no more.

The Times of the Gentiles comes to an End

The kingdom of the Antichrist, the very last of the earthly Gentile kingdoms, has now ended in complete failure. With the fall of Mystery

[374] The description of Babylon given here reminds us of Las Vegas and other such so-called entertainment cities scattered throughout today's world. Even so, those current sin-cities pale in comparison to the gross iniquity that will be found within Babylon of the last days before her destruction.

Babylon, the "times of the Gentiles" that had begun with the reign of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar comes to an abrupt end, as the Lord Jesus Christ returns to establish his Millennial Kingdom age upon the earth (cf. Lu. 21:24-27). This will be a Jewish Kingdom with Jesus Christ, the Messiah, ruling in Jerusalem upon the throne of David (cf. Lu.1:32,33).

Nebuchadnezzar had seen the earthly Gentile kingdoms crumble in a dream, which the prophet Daniel related to him in part as follows:

> ***"[34]Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet*** *that were* ***of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. [35]Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. [36]This*** *is* ***the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king"*** (Da.2:34-36).

The stone not cut out by human hands is the returning Christ, the head and cornerstone of the coming Kingdom; and the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold represent the heads and populations of previous Gentile empires that He will completely demolish at his second coming (cf. Mt.21:44).

Daniel had foreseen this coming Kingdom that would bring to an end all earthly Gentile kingdoms in his interpretation of the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream,[375] which he recorded as follows:

> ***"[44]And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people,*** *but* ***it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. [45]Forasmuch***

[375] cf. The Composite Nature of the First Beast, page 280.

> ***as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream*** *is* ***certain, and the interpretation thereof sure"*** (Da. 2:44,45).

God will establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth through and for his Christ; a Kingdom that shall never be destroyed, but shall stand forever as it ultimately moves into eternity. His Kingdom will not be dependent upon human agency to form or to perpetuate it, as were past kingdoms; for, his Kingdom will have broken into pieces and totally consumed all remnants of those previous Gentile kingdoms. ○

Revelation Chapter 19

As this Chapter begins, we must again take note that the Chapter divisions that we find in our Bible are not part of the inspired text; rather, in like manner of verse numbering, they were added solely as a means of organizing the text. Arguably, the text of verses 1-6 of Chapter 19 could have been better placed at the end of Chapter 18. Thus as we continue on into this chapter, we find that John continues to observe the joyous activities of the blessed residents of Heaven that had taken place in Revelation 18:20, even as the ultimate judgment of Babylon had been executed upon the earth.

Alleluias Praising God over His Judgment of Babylon

While the unrepentant earth dwellers had blasphemed God – even as they had suffered an excruciating death – the great multitudes of Heaven had rejoiced, as we observed earlier in Revelation 18:20 on page 358. Here we find a culmination of that great celebration as the multitude in Heaven praise God for his judgment of Babylon that had once seduced and corrupted the entire earth with her iniquitous fornication:

> **"[1]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: [2]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. [3]And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever"** (Re.19:1-3).

"After these things" refers to that which John had seen in Chapters 17 and 18 concerning the just destruction of Babylon. Now, John hears the loud voices of many people in Heaven praising God and attributing

salvation, glory, honor, and power to the Lord our God alone. This is the very first place that "Alleluia" (i.e. *Praise ye Jah!*), an adorning acclamation praising the great God Jehovah, appears in the Revelation, and it is found four times in just six verses. The word translated "people" found here is *ochlos* in the Greek, which describes a vast throng of people. Therefore, this great throng of worshipers found in verses 1 thru 3 above are not angels, but are human men and women who have received eternal deliverance through Christ.

They acclaim with one voice that God's judgments are true and righteous in having judged religious Babylon, the great harlot that had corrupted the earth with her satanic fornication. In judging her, God had avenged the blood of his bond-servants[376] who had loved and served Him out of a reverential fear of his being. These were those whom Babylon had branded as false witnesses and outcasts for their faithful witness of Christ, and at the evil bidding of the Antichrist had put them to death. The great throng of the redeemed again cried out *Alleluia*, as the smoke from wicked commercial Babylon's judgment forever rose up to Heaven out of the great fires of her eternal destruction.

> **"[4]And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. [5]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. [6]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"** (Re,19:4-6).

In this passage, we have returned with John to the throne-room of God in Heaven, where we again see the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures that we had first observed in Chapter 4 serving before

[376]The Greek word translated "servants" in this verse is *doulos*, which literally means a "slave." In the context of this verse, it refers to a man who had voluntarily subjected (bonded) himself to serve God, having devoted himself to forever serve his master out of reverential love (cf. Ex. 21:2-6).

the throne. They echo their own amen to the chorus of this great human throng, as they praise God and fall down before the throne to worship Him.

The voice ringing out of the throne is apparently that of a faithful created intelligence,[377] inasmuch as he implores all creation to "praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." The great voice from the throne was immediately followed by the unified voices of a great multitude of all the angelic beings who faithfully serve God.

Again, we find that their combined praise sounds as if it were coming from a mighty waterfall punctuated by thundering crashes. Out of this great cacophony of voices is heard their united and repeated thundering cries of "*Alleluia*: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" All of the false religions and evil worship imposed by the great religious harlot, that had dared to thwart God's will on earth, has been totally crushed, and the great commercial Babylon which had enabled her is no more having been consumed by eternal flames of fire.

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Beginning in Chapter 16 of the Revelation and continuing on through Chapter 18, we have observed the terrifying consequences that had fallen upon the reprobate earth-dwellers as seven angels had poured out seven bowls of God's undiluted wrath. The parenthetical text of Chapters 17 and 18 has fully described the destruction of Babylon, which had come about as the fifth bowl of God's wrath had been poured out upon the seat of the vast commercial kingdom of the Antichrist (cf. page 323).

As we begin our exposition of the remaining text of Chapter 19, Christ has not yet returned to the earth to engage the eastern kings in the great War of Armageddon; we shall read of Christ's victorious return within this Chapter on page 369. Moreover, the seventh angel has not yet discharged the deadly contents of the seventh and final bowl of

[377]In all likelihood, this could be the voice of the archangel Gabriel, who acts as God's "chief announcer" to deliver various messages of great significance (cf. Da. 8:16; 9:21; Lu.1:19, 26).

God's wrath upon the earth's atmosphere,[378] whereupon the eastern kings of the earth and their great armies will be instantaneously consumed where they stand, before they can take any action against Jerusalem (cf. page 376 of this current Chapter).

Rejoicing over the Lamb's Wife

As we resume the main narrative here in Chapter 19 verse 7, we find that the marriage of Jesus Christ, the Lamb, to his bride, the Raptured Church, has previously taken place in Heaven:

> **"[7]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. [8]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"** (Re.19:7,8).

John's attention is now directed by the voice out of the throne away from the destruction and demise of Babylon toward the joyful marriage of the Lamb (i.e. Jesus Christ). The angelic hosts are enjoined to acknowledge the high honor that the Father has conferred upon the Lamb through his Church, which consists of all of those whom the Lord Jesus Christ had redeemed to the Father through his blood.

We find here that the Church is referred to as the Lamb's wife, not his bride, inasmuch as her marriage to the Lamb "is come." The words "is come" is *erchomai* in the Greek; the tense of this verb as it is used here indicates that the marriage had been recently consummated in Heaven.

When it is said that "his wife hath made herself ready," it means that the redeemed Church has prepared herself to accept her obligations as the beloved wife of Christ – not that she has done anything to make herself righteous or deserving of that high privilege. Christ has purchased the Church with his own blood, so "that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that

[378] cf. The Seventh Bowl is Poured Out in the Earth's Atmosphere, page 328.

it should be holy and without blemish" (cf. Ep. 5:25-27). The redeemed saints making up the Church are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, which has been imputed to them through God's mercy and grace, thus making them his permanent possession. Her pure and righteous state is symbolized by her being dressed in "fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints"[379]

The Marriage Supper on Earth Announced

> **"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"** (Re.19:9).

Whereas the marriage had taken place in Heaven, the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place upon the earth at the beginning of the Millennial Age. This marriage supper was depicted in Jesus' Olivet Discourse in Matthew 25:1-13, as ten virgins who were awaiting the coming of the bridegroom.[380] The ten virgins are the invited guests of the bridegroom called upon to honor the bride (i.e. the Church); they are not the bride who will arrive with Christ from the house of his Father. Therefore, it can be assumed that the honored guests will consist of Old-Covenant Jews as well as the redeemed remnant of Israel in that day. The marriage supper of the Lamb will not be a brief "sit-down affair," for it actually constitutes the continual personal fellowship and blessings the "guests" will enjoy with the Lord Jesus and his beloved Church throughout the Millennial age.

The previously unseen voice apparently emerged visibly out of the throne when he said to John, "These are the true sayings of God," thus placing God's Word as a seal upon the proceedings.

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[379] This symbolism of fine white linen has carried over through tradition today in the Christian marriage of a man and a woman, wherein the bride is commonly dressed in a great flowing robe of white as an indication of her purity.

[380] cf. Parable of the Ten Virgins, page 557.

> **"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"** (Re.19:10).

John does not describe any visible personification of this voice (cf. Re. 19:5 above) for us. Yet, he was apparently so astounded by the authoritative countenance of his sudden appearance, that he involuntarily "fell at his feet to worship him."[381] This brought forth an immediate rebuke as the Heavenly being told him to worship God alone; for he stated that he was in fact a fellow-servant of God, and therefore was as John's brethren that have the testimony of Jesus, whose Words are the very breath of all prophecy.

When a Christian reads the words "testimony of Jesus," the primary thought is of our witnessing of Him to a lost world, but that completely misses the point here. Here it is Jesus' prophetic witnessing to the Truth of God's Word regarding all things that must come to pass concerning Himself, as He returns to judge and rule over the earth (cf. Re. 19:9).

The Coming Kingdom of Heaven on Earth

Jesus had earlier rode upon a humble colt of a donkey as He resolutely approached Jerusalem for the very last time at the end of his earthly ministry prior to his suffering (cf. Mt.21:5-9). Most, if not all, of those who had accompanied Jesus on his final return to Jerusalem falsely assumed that He, the Messiah, was going there to forcibly put down all opposition to his rule and immediately establish his Kingdom Age upon the earth.[382]

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[381] All angels are magnificent in their appearance, and Archangels are even more-so such that men can be unwittingly drawn to worship them as deity. This fault is very hazardous, inasmuch as Satan, the fallen Archangel Lucifer, also appears to men as a beautiful angel of light (cf. 2Co. 11:14).

[382] They saw this as a political kingdom, not understanding that in the Kingdom Age to come God's will must prevail in the same strict way that it presently rules in Heaven (cf. Mt. 6:10).

Hence, they triumphantly spread palm leaves and their coats on the ground before Him, directing Him ever onward toward Jerusalem – even as they repeatedly shouted out "Blessed is He who cometh in the Name of the Lord." This was the very words that Jesus had earlier stated that He would hear welcoming his return to Jerusalem (cf. Lu.13:35). Nevertheless, those words were not spoken by the hostile religious rulers of Jerusalem, but by his over-zealous followers who did not realize the rejection and suffering that inevitably awaited Him.

The Parable of the Ten Minas

As they drew near to the great city, Jesus sought to prepare his Apostles for that which was about to come to pass through a parable, commonly referred to as the *Parable of the Ten Minas* (cf. Lu.19:11-27).[383] Jesus spoke this parable to his Apostles to deter them from any false expectations of a peaceful settlement with the hostile Jewish religious rulers; for He had not at that time come to Jerusalem to set up his earthly Kingdom, but to save that which was lost (cf. Lu. 19:10) by dying for the sins of his people (cf. He. 2:17).

The Betrayal by Jesus' Once Triumphal Followers

After having arrived in Jerusalem, it soon became increasingly apparent to the multitude that had accompanied Jesus into Jerusalem that He

[383]Although the general structure of this parable is similar to the *Parable of the Talents*, it differs in detail from it in many ways. First, the numbers and descriptions of the given amounts entrusted to the servants are different. In the *Parable of the Talents*, the unprofitable servant is cast into outer darkness, while in this parable it would appear that he only loses his Stewardship over his Lord's valuable goods. While in both parables there are two faithful servants mentioned as well as one unfaithful servant, the parable in the Gospel of Luke makes a direct reference to the unfaithfulness of Israel whose religious rulers had refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah. Resolutely stating that they hated Jesus and his teaching, the Jewish religious rulers had adamantly refused to accept his divine right to rule over them (cf. Lu.19:14). Therefore, the only way that the Kingdom could come into existence at that time would require that all of Jesus' enemies repent or be slain, and Israel would never abide anything that unthinkable (cf. Lu. 19:27). Thus, Jesus must die in their place to make the future kingdom possible.

was not going to forcibly establish his Kingdom at that time. Thus, his once-ardent followers who had earlier worshiped and praised Him, wrongly saw Him as a false Messiah who had deliberately tricked them into following after Him – as many other false "messiahs" had in the past. Consequently, all of them added their own voices to the angry mob that shouted out for Pilate to crucify Him (cf. Lu.23:21).

So it was that Israel had ignorantly crucified their true Messiah, and the price that they were to pay for that obstinate evil act was so terrible that Jesus had earlier lamented over them saying,

> ***"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,*** *thou* ***that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under*** *her* ***wings, and ye would not"*** (Mt. 23:37)**!**

While Israel's betrayal of their Messiah to suffer death on a Roman cross appeared to be a great tragedy, Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead and his bodily ascension to his Father turned tragedy into absolute victory as was exemplified with the establishment of his ever-faithful Church. Now that man's sin problem has been resolved to the full satisfaction of the Father, the establishment of a Kingdom Age upon the earth is inevitable, even as Jesus Christ once again turns his attention to Jerusalem and to the redemption of the Jews, the people of his incarnation, who had ignorantly rejected Him.

Christ's Return to Earth as its Conquering King

We find an early prophetic account of Christ's victorious return to the earth in the book of Psalms, which is so highly descriptive of that event that we chose to insert it here in its entirety as an introduction to the text concerning Jesus' return to the earth at this place in the Revelation:

> ***"***[3]***Gird thy sword upon*** *thy* ***thigh, O*** *most* ***mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.*** [4]***And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness*** *and*

> ***righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.*** [5]***Thine arrows*** *are* ***sharp in the heart of the king's enemies;*** *whereby* ***the people fall under thee.*** [6]***Thy throne, O God,*** *is* ***for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom*** *is* ***a right sceptre.*** [7]***Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*** [8]***All thy garments*** *smell* ***of myrrh, and aloes,*** *and* ***cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.*** [9]***Kings' daughters*** *were* ***among thy*** *honourable* ***women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir*** (Ps. 45:3-9).

This passage from Psalm 45 describes Christ, the Messiah, as He returns to the earth in all of his glory and majesty. The "sword" tells of his power to kill and to destroy all of his enemies. He will come in Truth, with meekness, and righteousness, but his Truth will go forth from his mouth like arrows into the hearts of God's enemies. All about Him will be the "aroma" of the Heavenly palaces which He had enjoyed and from which He had come.

In this verse we see God the Father speaking with his Son as deity unto deity when he says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom *is* a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

The last sentence found in this text speaks of the honored bridesmaids (i.e. kings' daughters) that were present at Jesus' marriage Supper of the Church (cf. Mt. 25:1-13; page 366). The Church, seen standing here at his right hand, is no longer dressed in white as his bride in all of her purity; rather, She is now seen fully established as his beloved Queen dressed in magnificent golden attire. Her garments are exceedingly bright – as was the gold taken from the eastern region of *Ophir*. Here we behold the Church as Christ's powerful and loyal consort ready to stand by Him and to aid Him in the great conquest that lies ahead:

Jesus, the Faithful and True

Returning now to our text in the Revelation, the Apostle John beholds the victorious return of Christ, the Messiah, coming down from out of Heaven as He arrives upon the earth to cleanse it of all iniquity in preparation for the establishment of his Kingdom Age:

> **"[11]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. [12]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. [13]And he** ***was*** **clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God"** (Re.19:11-13).

As John rises to is feet, he sees Heaven open up before his eyes, and coming out of that great expanse a magnificent white stallion appears. A white horse in the Scriptures is an animal symbolizing majesty and peace. Thus, the Antichrist was earlier symbolized as a rider upon a white horse as he attempted to emulate the coming Messiah (cf. Re.6:2; page 197). Nevertheless, his arrival had only brought forth global war, starvation, pestilence, anarchy, and utter chaos. In sharp contrast, the rider on this magnificent white horse is called "Faithful and True." He is Jesus, the Christ, the true and faithful Messiah – faithful to his divine nature and true to his divine mission, inasmuch as his very Word is Truth, for He is the living Word of God (cf. Jn.1:1).

The Lord Jesus, highly glorified, rides the majestic white stallion as He returns in great power to judge the earth and to establish a true and lasting peace (cf. Jn.14:27). His eyes are as flaming fire as He seeks out his opposition (cf. Re.1:14b). He is clothed in a garment that has been stained with the blood of his many enemies that had opposed Him. On his head are many crowns taken from all of the kingdoms that are and had ever before existed upon the earth. All Kingdoms of the earth are now his and his alone to claim, to rule over, and to judge (cf. Re.11:15).

The Name above all Names

The returning King has a name written down that only He knows. That mysterious name, although unknown to all but Himself, is nevertheless directly equated with the Word of God. This takes us back to the Gospel of John wherein we have read,

> ***"[1]In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2]The same was in the beginning with God." – [14]"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth"*** (Jn. 1:1,2,14).

John the Apostle had referred to Him as the Logos (Greek, *Hypostasis*), the very substance of God, the living Word, who was in the beginning within the Godhead, such that in Him was life and the light of men (cf. Jn. 1:1-4). We note that John the Baptist openly identified Jesus as the divine Son of God (cf. Jn. 1:34). Nevertheless, on earth He was more simply known as Jesus as He walked among us; hence, He was also called Emanuel (i.e. "God with us" cf. Mt.1:23). Jesus most often referred to Himself as the "Son of man," thus equating Himself with "the Ancient of Days," the eternal One as it is recorded in Daniel 7:13.

Yet all of those human names fall far short of fully revealing his true divine identity within the Godhead Itself. That name that He alone knows is a name that is so sacred that only deity can understand or lay claim to it. Throughout the depths of eternity, mankind will never be able to fully fathom that name nor fully grasp its profound meaning.

The War of Armageddon

As we read earlier, the sixth bowl of God's wrath was poured out upon the river Euphrates (cf page 324); thus, making way for the kings of the east to organize a massive attack upon Israel. As we shall discover in this Chapter, they will encounter the returning Messiah, the Christ, leading the vast armies of Heaven to engage them in battle

within the valley of Har-Magedo.[384] This great war in which Christ is altogether victorious is further described below.

In righteousness, Jesus Christ now comes forth out of Heaven to judge the remaining reprobate inhabitants of the earth leading to a massive slaughter in the valley of Har-Magedo (cf. Re.16:16; page 327) – a slaughter the likes of which the earth has never before experienced. Jesus' garment had already become sprinkled with the blood of his enemies, for He had long before his return tread the great winepress of God's wrath all alone (cf. Is.63:3).[385]

> **"[14]And the armies** *which were* **in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. [15]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. [16]And he hath on** *his* **vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS"** (Re.19:14-16).

It is commonly assumed that these armies of Heaven are made up of angels. However, the description given of the armies here suggests that a great portion of them consists of immortal glorified saints, who are clothed in clean white linen. Moreover, it is not known elsewhere in Scripture that angels, who are spirit beings, ever ride upon horses, as do many here. This interpretation is fully supported by a verse found in the Apostle Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians,

> ***"To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints"*** (1Th. 3:13,

[384] i.e. Armageddon.

[385] The fact that Christ has been treading the winepress all alone, indicates that He has been exercising individual judgment of God's wrath against the worst enemies of his people all along, yet short of the massive scale with which He will pursue all of his enemies in the great war of Armageddon.

emphasis added).

The Sword of Jesus' Mouth and the Rod of His Arm

The sharp sword going forth from Jesus' mouth is the Word of God that afflicts the rebellious nations on earth with Truth (cf. Re.1:14); the reprobate of that day will be severely wounded by the Truth that they had so long rejected, yet are now forced to acknowledge as being absolute – even to their own eternal peril.

The Lord Jesus has returned to rule over the nations with a "rod of iron" (cf. Ps. 2:6-9; Re. 2:27) as He enforces that Truth. This is a "rod" of judgment that will be sternly wielded to establish his sovereign authority over the earth and to ensure rigid obedience to his will. We find that this rod is first demonstrated in the execution of the fierce wrath of God in the bloody war of Armageddon.

KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS

We find in verse 19:16 that Jesus has a name written on the thigh of his vesture that identifies Him as "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." He is the King over all earthly kings, and the Lord over all earthly lords. Therefore, all of the previous kingdoms of the earth are soon to be gathered into one universal kingdom ruled by Jesus Christ, and all of God's authority will be concentrated in his Lordship over all the peoples upon the earth.

The Great Feast of the Fowls is Foretold

> **"[17]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; [18]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"** (Re.19:17,18).

John saw an angel standing in the Sun. The Greek word found here is *hēlios,* which can be translated "sun" or analogously as an "extremely bright light." This angel is standing within an intense brightness above the earth as he shouts down to invite all of the fowls that fly within the earth's atmosphere to gather themselves together for one great feast.

Admittedly, this feast of the fowls of the air is a loathsome and offensive thing to contemplate, but it tells us just how much God despises the nonredeemable flesh of the unrepentant reprobate who hates Him and scorns his offer of grace and mercy through the sacrifice of his beloved Son. The vultures and other birds of prey are invited by the angel to eat the flesh of kings, captains, and the flesh of mighty men and even the flesh of their horses as their riders are slaughtered.

Social or political station of life will not be differentiated, as the flesh of all men both free and bond, both small and great, will have become carrion for the vultures of the earth.

Gathering of the Earth's Armies against Christ

> **"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"** (Re.19:19).

John saw the Antichrist (i.e. the beast) and the kings of the earth at his command along with their armies gathered together to make one last desperate stand against the Lord Jesus Christ and the powerful massive armies of Heaven. Nevertheless, the ultimate outcome of this conflict is never in doubt; Christ's complete victory is inevitable.

Antichrist and the False Prophet Captured

> **And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with**

brimstone" (Re.19:20).

The Political Antichrist, the first beast, as well as the False Prophet, the second beast, who had deceived those that had received the mark of the beast into worshiping Satan through the abominable image, were captured; and both were immediately cast alive into the Lake of Fire that burned with brimstone within an outer darkness. These two are the very first to enter the fiery domain of Hell that had long awaited them.[386]

Mass Slaughter of Kings and their Armies

> **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"** (Re.19:21).

The Kings of the earth and their armies were summarily slain by this sword that proceeded out of the mouth of Christ. This sword is the powerful Word of God. At the express command of Jesus Christ, all of the remnant of the earthly armies will suddenly perish where they stand even as the seventh angel of Re. 16:17 pours out the seventh bowl of God's wrath into the air.

> ***"And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth"*** (Ze.14:12).[387]

The vultures and every other carrion-eating bird will then fall upon what remains of their dead flesh and gorge themselves until they have

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[386]At the very end of the Millennium, these two will be joined by Satan Himself (cf. Page 389) and then by a great multitude of the reprobate dead, who must first stand before the Great White Throne to receive their just sentence of damnation (cf. page 390).

[387]It must be assumed that the seventh angel has just discharged the contents of the seventh and last bowl of wrath upon the earth's atmosphere; therefore, "it is done."

had their fill. Thus, will the earth be cleansed of the decaying bodies of those evil inhabitants who had opposed God and his Christ.

Jesus Christ Enters Jerusalem

Following the great war of Armageddon, in which the Lord Jesus is absolutely victorious, He will enter Jerusalem to take his rightful place upon the throne of David. We find no specific text concerning his entry into Jerusalem recorded within the Revelation. Ezekiel prophesied concerning a vision that he had received concerning the physical properties of the Millennial Temple[388] as it was revealed to him by a mysterious "man of brass." This prophecy included text in Ezekiel Chapter 43 verses 1-12 describing Jesus' future entry into the city of Jerusalem via the eastern gate and then his entry into this magnificent Millennial Temple:

> ***"[1]Afterward [the man of brass] brought me to the gate,*** *even* ***the gate that looketh toward the east: [2]And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice*** *was* ***like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. [3]And*** *it was* ***according to the appearance of the vision which I saw,*** *even* ***according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions*** *were* ***like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face"*** (Ez.43:1-3)**.**

Once the Millennial Temple is completed in Jerusalem the *Shekinah* glory of God will return. This is not a phenomena but a person as is indicated by the pronouns "he" and "his." This is the return of Jesus Christ to the Temple, who will come through the eastern gate of the city within a cloud of glory. His voice will be overpowering as is the sound of a great waterfall, and His glory will cover the earth. This assuredly reminds Ezekiel of the glory of God that he had recorded in Ez. 1:4-28.

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[388]cf. Addendum Article, The Millennial Temple, page 636.

Again, he fell prone upon his face, this time at the appearance of the *Shekinah* glory of God encompassing his Son, Jesus Christ.[389]

Jesus Christ Enters the Millennial Temple

> ***"[4]And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect** is **toward the east. [5]So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house"*** (Ez.43:4,5).

Christ enters through the eastern gate of the city.[390] As He enters the inner court of the Temple, He closes and seals the eastern gate behind Him (cf. Ez.44:1-3), such that none other can ever enter after Him, and His glory filled the entire house (i.e. the "Temple").

> ***"[6]And I heard** him **speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me. [7]And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile,** neither **they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places"*** (Ez.43:6,7).

With the mysterious "man of brass" standing beside him, Ezekiel hears Christ speaking to him from out of the Temple: He vows that He will forever dwell upon his Throne and shall forever walk in the midst of the children of Israel. Never again will the Jew defile his name; neither will there be any earthly king in Israel who will defile his holy name

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[389]The worship that takes place within the Millennial Temple is fully described by Ezekiel in Chapters 43-46.

[390] It should be noted that this Eastern Gate has been sealed off, such that none can presently enter or exit the city through it. It was sealed shut in AD 1540–41 by order of Suleiman the Magnificent, a sultan of the Ottoman Empire in an impossible effort to prevent the Jewish Messiah from ever gaining entrance to Jerusalem.

through their acts of unfaithfulness to Him. Nor will the graves of those dead kings be worshiped upon the high places of their burial.

> ***8"In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the wall between me and them, they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. 9Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcases of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever"*** (Ez. 43:8,9).

The mortal kings had set their own limits of authority along side Christ's absolute authority, and they had set down the pillars of their own will along side Christ's will. They had defiled the wall that Christ had placed between He and them through many abominations that they had committed; thus, stirring up Christ's righteous anger that had ultimately consumed them. Now Israel must put away all of their whoredoms and the carcases of their mortal kings whom they had previously worshiped far away from them as the Millennial age dawns; for Christ alone will be worshiped, and He alone shall live in their midst and shall reign over them forever. ○

Revelation Chapter 20

Throughout the Old Testament, we find God's oft-repeated promise to Israel of an ultimate Kingdom-Age to come – of which all the earlier earthly kingdoms of Israel were but a type. The prophet Isaiah spoke concerning this coming Kingdom of Heaven on earth centuries before Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, was incarnated within the womb of a human mother, Mary, and was thus delivered into the world.

> ***"[6]For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. [7]Of the increase of*** *his* ***government and peace*** *there shall be* ***no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this"*** (Is. 9:6,7).

The kingdom of Israel had approached its apogee as to type during the reign of King David; however, David's sin had greatly tarnished that kingdom as to being a valid type. Thus, it fell to David's son, Solomon, to built the great Temple in Jerusalem. Although Israel had reached its material and political peak during the reign of Solomon, it had also marked the beginning of a long period of spiritual decline away from it being a viable type of the ultimate Kingdom to come.

Nevertheless, God in his great mercy had promised David that One coming in his lineage would one day in the future establish that perfect Kingdom in which the previous types would be fulfilled in ultimate reality:

> ***"[11]And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go*** *to be* ***with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. [12]He shall build me an***

> ***house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.*** [13]***I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took*** *it* ***from*** *him* ***that was before thee:*** [14]***But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore"*** (1Ch.17:11-14).

This prophecy, like so many other Old-Testament prophecies concerning the coming Kingdom age, finds its ultimate fulfillment here within this Chapter of the Revelation. That greater son of David, coming forth in his line, is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God (cf. Mt. 1:1; Lu. 1:31-33).

The Millennial Age

> ***"***[10]***Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD.*** [11]***And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.*** [12]***And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again"*** (Zec. 2:10-12).

At long last, all opposition will have been put down by Christ, and the age of the wondrous Kingdom of Heaven on earth will dawn as He, the Messiah, victorious in battle, takes his rightful place upon the throne in Jerusalem as the "**King of Kings and Lord of Lords**." From Jerusalem, Christ, the Messiah, shall reign over the entire earth as many Gentile nations are joined to Him.

The Thousand Years

As we begin our exposition of chapter 20, it becomes quite evident within the first seven verses that this future Kingdom Age on earth will span one-thousand years. This thousand-year period is commonly

referred to as the Millennium or Millennial age.[391] "Millennia" is a Latin word translated from the Greek word *chilioi* found in these verses, which is very specific and unquestionably means "thousand." Likewise, the Greek word *etos* clearly means "year." Therefore, "millennium," wherein the prefix "milli" specifically means one thousand, unquestionably refers to a period of one-thousand years.

The Incarceration of Satan

> **"[1]And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. [2]And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, [3]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"** (Re.20:1-3).

The connective word "and" that begins this verse indicates that it is a continuation of verse 19:21 in which all of the mortal enemies of Christ had been decimated in a great slaughter in the War of Armageddon. We have previously read that the Antichrist and the False Prophet along with those who worshiped the image of the Antichrist, will have been cast into the Lake of fire and brimstone.(cf. Re.19:20). These were the first occupants of Hell, which had just been opened to receive them – yet, we note here that Satan had been spared from that immediate judgment.[392]

We find that Satan, that old serpent who had tempted Eve in the garden, will be securely bound and incarcerated for a thousand years so that he can no longer exercise his evil power to tempt and subvert men upon the earth during the Millennial Age. The place of his imprisonment is

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[391]cf. Article: The Millennial Age on Earth, Addendum, page 614.

[392] This delay may be attributable to his previously high standing as an archangel, of which only three are mentioned by name in all of Scripture (Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer – i.e. Satan).

specified as the "bottomless pit" from which God had previously permitted him to release a swarm of his demons (cf. page 235).

It is significant to note that Satan, once the magnificent archangel Lucifer, is now humbled by an angel of much lower rank as he places chains upon him. A seal was also placed upon Satan's "mouth" to silence him so he could no longer deceive mankind, nor in any way continue to entice them to commit evil for the entire thousand-year period of his imprisonment. Even so, we find that Satan must be released at the very end of the Millennial age for a brief final period of time, about which we shall have more to say below (cf. Re. 20:7; page 385).

Judges Established within the Millennium

> **"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"** (Re.20:4).

John saw many thrones upon which previously resurrected men were seated as judges over the earth. In the Gospel of Matthew we read the following words that Jesus spoke to Peter concerning his Apostles who had forsaken everything to follow Him:

> ***"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*** (Mt.19:28).

Jesus' twelve Apostles had stood firm for Him and for the Word of God under the most severe testing.[393] All of them will have returned

[393]We must understand that Judas Iscariot who had betrayed Christ, had been replaced by Mathias who had taken Judas' place among the twelve.

with Christ to the earth to live with Him during the Millennial Age, wherein they will reign under Christ as judges over the twelve tribes of Israel. In addition, John saw the souls of many of their followers who had been martyred for their unremitting witness of Jesus Christ and for their firm stand for the Word of God. It is stated they had not worshiped the Antichrist or his image, and had refused to receive his mark on their foreheads or in their hands.

Narrowly interpreted, this could imply that only those saints who had lived on earth during the reign of the Antichrist are included in this group of rulers. However, this statement could equally apply to those who had lived on earth in the many ages before the reign of the ultimate Antichrist. This likely refers to many others of the Raptured Church who will physically return to the earth with Christ. Those men will reign with Christ under the twelve Apostles as regional judges over the Gentile nations for the entire thousand-year period.

Two Separate Resurrections Revealed

> **"[5]But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This** *is* **the first resurrection. [6]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"** (Re.20:5,6).

Those of this first resurrection are declared to be holy (i.e. blessed and uniquely set aside for God's use) such that they will never suffer the second death, and they shall serve as priests of God and Christ throughout the Millennial Age.[394] The "rest of the dead" referred to in verse 5 are those who will have failed to follow Christ, but had stubbornly re-

[394]The two resurrections are discussed in much greater detail on page 606 within an Addendum Article entitled The Resurrection of the Dead. (cf Illustration 11: Timeline: Two Resurrection Periods, page 608).

jected Him and his gracious offer of eternal salvation. In the latter days, most will have also received the blasphemous mark of the Antichrist.[395]

Thus, the second resurrection constitutes an exclusive resurrection consisting only of the unsaved reprobate.[396] Having no place within the Millennium, where only righteousness prevails, the reprobate will not be resurrected to be judged until the thousand years has come to an end, just before the Eternal Ages begin.[397]

Satan Released as the Millennium Ends

> **"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,"** (Re. 20:7)

At the very end of the Millennium, Satan will be released from the bottomless pit (i.e. the great abyss).[398] Why God would free Satan at the end of the Millennium, even for a little season, is connected with the greater question of why God would have permitted iniquity to infect Adam in the garden of Eden through the intervention of Satan. It was absolutely necessary for God to do so in order that iniquity could be permanently expunged from all of His creation through a fully redeemed sinless human race.[399] Here, God will permit Satan to seal his fate.

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[395]cf. Illustration 11: Timeline: Two Resurrection Periods on page 608.

[396]Resurrection in both of these instances is *anastasei* in the Greek, which literally means "to stand up again." Since it is unimaginable how a soul or spirit could stand up, this obviously means that both constitute a physical bodily resurrection. Physical death, the first death, constitutes a separation of the soul from the mortal body, which all will have suffered; but more to be feared is the second death, which is a final separation of soul and spirit from God and all that is eternally good.

[397]cf. The Second Resurrection, page 391.

[398]cf. The Incarceration of Satan , page 382.

[399]God's long campaign against iniquity is discussed in some detail within an Article entitled The Mystery of Iniquity, on page 569 of the Addendum.

The Final Uprising of Atheism: Gog and Magog

Unlike God, Satan is not omniscient; although he is a defeated foe, he is still determined to carry on his iniquitous rebellion until the very last moment in an egotistical hope that he will yet win in the end. He does so through his continual deception and corruption of mankind leading to a final resurgence of atheism – even as a transition is about to take place from the kingdom Age on earth into its permanent state within the Eternal Ages:

> **"[8]And [Satan]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. [9]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"** (Re.20:8,9).

The placement of verse 8 immediately following the release of Satan as is recorded in verse 7 indicates that Satan will instigate a massive invasion of Israel from out of the four quarters of the earth that will occur at the very end of the Millennium. The prophet Ezekiel wrote of this invasion in Chapters 38 and 39 of his prophecy:

> ***"[1]And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, [2]Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him"*** (Ez.38:1,2).

"*Gog"* found in this verse means "roof," or "top man" and it refers to a man who is an atheistic dictator. *Magog* is a Hebrew word that means "head" or "top nation." It describes a nation derived from the sons of Japheth, who was one of the three sons of Noah that had inhabited the lands north of Ur after the time of the confusion of languages on the plain of Shinar (cf. Ge.11:7).[400] The Hebrew word translated "chief"

[400]An earlier analysis of the words "*Gog*" and "*Magog*" can be found in *CRC* Book III, on page 617, and with some modification, it has been reiterated here to fit within the proper context of the

is *roshe* which is derived from an unused root word that means to "shake up." *Roshe* may be directly equated with Russia (i.e. *Roshea*).

Meshech and *Tubal* are believed to have been the progenitors of the Slavic peoples largely making up the nation of Russia today. The word *Meshech* can be equated with *Muskovy*, which was the earlier name for Russia, and it also can be equated with Moscow, Russia's present-day capitol city. Likewise, *Tubal* can be equated with Tobolisk located in Syberia. Thus, we find that Russia is a "top nation" that covers Israel to the far north like a vast umbrella.

Therefore, it would seem to be beyond any reasonable doubt that the atheistic nation of Russia will be the nation from the far north that will lead a massive invasion against Israel at the very end of the Millennium, which will also include a confederation of other atheistic infested nations:

> ***"[5]Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: [6]Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands:*** *and* ***many people with thee"*** (Ez. 38:5,6).

Thus, we interpret that Russia will be joined in the invasion by Iran (i.e. Persia), Ethiopia (i.e. Cush), Egypt/Libya (i.e. Put), and Turkey (i.e. Togarmah), and will even be aided by Germany (i.e. Gomer). Russia's strange fellowship and cooperation with various war-like Islamic nations, such as Iran, which is currently bent upon Israel's destruction, tends to reinforce that view in today's world.

> ***"[3]And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I*** *am* ***against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal [4]And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts*** *of armour, even* ***a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords"*** (Ez.38:3,4).

Revelation.

It has been suggested by noted Bible expositor J. Vernon McGee that "the hooks" in verse 4 that will pull Russia into the land of Israel in the latter days is three-fold. First, is the persistent desire of Russia to obtain a warm-water port, second is to dominate the remaining oil deposits in the Middle East, and third is to mine the massive mineral deposits to be found in the Dead Sea.[401]

What those particular "hooks" are in any material sense is still a subject of much debate. Whatever they may be, the major "hook" will be a strong indoctrination of antisemitism that Satan has implanted within the minds of his atheistic followers. God will then use their irrational hatred of the Jews to draw Russia and her allies into one final battle against the Holy City of Jerusalem – the very city in which the Lord Jesus Christ will then rule over the earth from the throne of David.

At this time, God will directly engage the enemies of Israel. The powerful hand of God will be quite evident when he turns back Russia and her eager allies by inflicting them with six grievous plagues.

> ***"And I will [judge] against him [Gog] with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that*** *are* ***with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone"*** (Eze.38:22).

God will rain down upon the armies of *Gog* "pestilence and blood," "overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone," such that the armies of Gog cannot advance against Jerusalem; whereupon, the survivors will be scattered into the mountainous regions around Israel.

> ***"And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel"*** (Ez.39:2).

Only one sixth of this great army will survive to carry God's stern warning back to their home nations – just before they too are judged:

> ***"[6]And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them***

[401] cf. *Thru the Bible Radio,* Volume 3, page 515.

> ***that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I** am **the LORD.** [7]**So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I** am **the LORD, the Holy One in Israel"*** (Ez.39:6,7).

God will send a fire down out of Heaven upon all the peoples of *Magog* so that the inhabitants of the earth will know with absolute certainty that the God of Israel is Jehovah, the LORD. Israel will know the Holy One's name and will not be permitted to pollute it anymore. The atheistic heathen that had once polluted his Holy Name with impunity will also finally come to know that He is truly the LORD, the Holy One who resides in Israel – even as they perish.

Satan is Cast Into Hell

> **"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"** (Re. 20:10).

In this verse, we find that Satan, who had deceived the peoples of *Magog,* will be the third occupant of Hell that is described here as a lake of fire and brimstone, wherein he shall be continuously tormented forever and ever.[402] This lake of fire is located within a place of outer darkness where the light of God's mercy and goodness can never reach its occupants, and from where their iniquity can no more be exercised within the great sphere of God's presence in Heaven.

Satan and his demons will have preceded his human followers into Hell, who will have died as pawns in his earthly rebellion against God. Although they were but the pawns of Satan, they had been deeply infected with his iniquity; they cannot escape God's judgment, lest iniqui-

[402]Satan is not presently in Hell as popular folklore presumes. He is presently the "prince of the power of the air" (cf. Ep.2:2), and as such he controls much that currently goes on in the world as he prowls the earth in an effort to pervert the ungodly to achieve his evil ends.

ty continue to spread forth from them. Their eternal judgment is recorded in the next passage:

The Great White Throne Judgment

> **"[11]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. [12]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"** (Re.20:11,12).

In his vision, John saw a "Great White Throne." This throne differs from the one in God's royal throne room, which John had previously described in Revelation Chapter 4 verse 2. That throne had gleamed with every color of the rainbow, while this one is stark white. While John gives no description of the One sitting upon this throne, his face is so overpowering in its appearance that the earth and the heavens have fled away from Him, as his fearful countenance had demanded. Therefore, it would appear that this Great White Throne is neither on earth nor in Heaven, but will stand alone in a vast eternal void or emptiness.[403]

The One sitting upon this great white throne is clearly the glorified Christ, whom John had first seen back in Chapter 1 of the Revelation. This is not God the Father, inasmuch as the Father has given all judgment of mankind over to the Son, such that they must pay homage to Him whom they had previously rejected. As Jesus had said concerning this time of final judgment,

> ***"[25]Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. [26]For as the Father***

[403]It could be assumed that this Great White Throne is established following the dissolving away of the old creation, and just before the New Creation comes into existence (cf. Re. 21:1; Commentary page 397).

> ***hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; [27]And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. [28]Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, [29]And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"*** (Jn.5:25-29).

In verse 28 of this text, we find that all of those whose bodies are in their graves will one day hear the voice of Jesus Christ, and that they all will arise at his command.

> ***"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written,*** *As* ***I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God"*** (Ro, 4:10a, 11).

Those who have done good works that were preordained by God (cf. Ep. 2:10) will be resurrected first to receive eternal life,[404] while those who have done the evil works of Satan must later be resurrected to receive the final sentence of eternal condemnation. This constitutes two separate resurrections: first, the resurrection of the justified; and second, the resurrection of the eternally lost.[405]

The Second Resurrection

In Revelation 20 verse 12 above, John observes that the second resurrection of the eternally lost was taking place when he saw the dead of every stature and station of life, both small and great, standing before God. Those men and women[406] will arise from their graves at the com-

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[404]The first resurrection culminates in the Rapture of the Church (cf. 1Th. 4:16,17).

[405]cf. Illustration 11: Timeline: Two Resurrection Periods, page 608.

[406]The Greek word for "man" is *hekastos* in the Greek, which means each is identified as a uniquely created human being and must therefore be understood to include women as well as men.

mand of Christ to stand before the Great White Throne at the very end of the Millennium.

> **"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"** (Re. 20:13).

The sea gave up the dead (i.e. the bodies of the dead) that had been interred within it. Likewise, death and the grave[407] gave up the bodies held captive by them.[408] Many of those bodies had long since returned to the elements from which they had been created. Likewise, bodies that had been burned alive or cremated after death cannot be omitted from this second resurrection, for their scattered elements still remain from which they will be reconstituted by the power of God almighty. It must be assumed that all bodies of the lost will be restored to their original mortal form in which they had committed their iniquitous acts.

The Books are Opened

Every man will be judged before the Great White Throne according to their works. The "books" referred to here in this passage is *bibilon* in the Greek, which literally means a roll or a scroll. The first set of scrolls contain an unabridged record of every deed committed on earth by all of those individuals who stand before this Great White Throne. The record of their lives will be fully laid open before them so that every man and woman must read of their evil deeds for themselves. There is no defense possible; for these records will clearly condemn every one of them, and a claim of ignorance is no vindication,

> ***"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***

[407] "Hell" found in this verse is *Hades* in the Greek, denoting a place wherein the souls of departed reprobate men reside while their physical bodies are imprisoned in the grave awaiting final judgment in the second resurrection.

[408] This verse refers to death as a personalized thing that has imprisoned the body.

that they are without excuse" (Ro. 1:20).

Condemnation of the Human Conscience

The human conscience, the soul's built-in warning system, which had been long ignored, blunted, and seared by repeated sin, will suddenly be reactivated – not to warn as before, but now to overwhelm the sinner through a great sense of guilt for every sin they had ever committed. They shall finally see themselves as they truly are; every supposed secret sin, whether a mere thought or action, will be fully revealed to them as it is exposed to the light of God's unbending Truth.

The reprobate must then recount their every sin as the demeaning ruinous thought or action that it was. They shall recall every one of them in stark detail, which had so thoroughly defiled them; and they will loathe themselves for all of the evil that they had perpetrated over their lifetimes. As we read God's word to Israel in the prophecy of Ezekiel,

> ***"And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed"*** (Ez. 20:43).

There will be no doubt in their own minds that they have made themselves unsuited to enter God's Heaven. Heaven will actually seem repugnant to them, as being far too restrictive to accommodate their depraved nature. Therefore, every one who has ever said that he or she could stand before the judgment seat of God and mount a successful defense of their actions such that they may enter Heaven will discover, to their everlasting remorse and great fear, that they have absolutely nothing to say!

The Lamb's Book of Life is Searched

Nevertheless, one final effort will be made on behalf of this great multitude, lest any should claim that any one of them was inadvertently misjudged. Alas, when the Lamb's book of life is searched, none out of this great multitude standing before the judgment seat of Christ will find

their names written down in it. All of the redeemed will have been participants of the first resurrection. Many of that first resurrection had committed sins as grievous as some of those standing here. However, they were washed clean of their sins in the blood of Christ, who through his vicarious death had made full penal atonement for them. Therefore, their names were not blotted out of the book of life, as are the names of those who had vehemently rejected the atonement and are now standing here before the Great White Throne.

The False Plea of the Pseudo-Christian

Amazingly, a great number standing before the Great White Throne may dare believe that they are worthy of reconsideration because of their many wonderful works. As Jesus had declared to his disciples,

> ***"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"*** (Mt. 7:22)?

These are those who falsely believe that they are Christians and that they have been saved through mere intellectual ascent and their resultant works – apart from a genuine relationship with Christ through a spiritual rebirth. They falsely declare that they have done those estranged works in Jesus' name; thus, they dare call Him whom they do not truly know, "Lord." Jesus earlier said of many such as these,

> ***"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say"*** (Lu.6:46)?

These men and women are but superficial pseudo-Christians; they suffer from a form of satanically-inspired self-delusion. We truly know Christ, and He us, only if we are faithful to keep his Word and through an abiding desire to do his bidding, seek to obey his commands through an abundance of grace that He offers to those whom He loves. As we read in the first epistle of John,

> ***"[4]He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.***

> ***[5]But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him"*** (1Jn.2:4,5).

Because the pseudo-Christians pleading before Him at the Great White Throne do not truly know Him, they lie and the truth is not found in them. These men and women are not truly in Christ; since they have not received a spiritual rebirth, and their names are not found written down in the book of life.

> ***"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"*** (Mt.7:23).

Alas, Jesus never knew them in an intimate personal way as one of his own whom He had redeemed. Those who never truly knew Christ will find themselves condemned along with the other reprobate who have been infected with Satan's iniquity; they must be strictly judged according to their own deeds apart from God's grace, which they have rejected.

Degree of Punishment Determined

> ***"[5]But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; [6]Who will render to every man according to his deeds"*** (Ro. 2:5,6).

In accordance with the hardness of their hearts, the unrepentant reprobate have stored up within themselves the indignation and wrath of God that will be rendered unto them in this day of his righteous judgment. Those who had done extremely wicked deeds will be punished much greater than those who had committed less sinful deeds. Those "less sinful deeds" will include sins of ignorance and neglect, apart from obstinate willful deeds. This differentiation will be determined from that which is recorded in the scrolls detailing each of their mortal lives. Each must receive their just reward – to each according to their sins.

The Second Death

Even so, all of this great multitude of resurrected dead, whose names are not found written down in the Lamb's book of life, must all go into the lake of fire within outer darkness. Inasmuch as they have rejected Him, God must now in turn abandon them to continue on forever in their hopeless perverted state.

The purpose of physical death and the grave had been fulfilled in what is referred to as the "first death," which is the separation of the human soul from the body of flesh. This final judgment wherein men and women who have rejected the grace of God in Christ are strictly judged, is referred to as the "second death" wherein both body and soul are to be cast into Hell, the lake of fire, without any hope of reprieve, pardon, or redemption.

Death and Hades Cast into the Lake of Fire

> **[14]"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. [15]And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"** (Re.20:14,15)**.**

The Greek word translated as "Hell" in verse 14 is *Hades*, which must be properly understood as the unseen place of departed souls, or concerning the physical body, the grave.[409] We find that in a final act of God, death and the grave (*Hades*), which had given up the bodies of their dead, were both cast into the lake of fire along with "whosoever were not found written in the book of life," thus putting a final end to death and the grave. ○

[409]Hades is represented in Illustration 10: Sheol/Hades, on page 600 as containing two widely separated regions: one peaceful region labeled Paradise and the other a terrible place of anguish.

Revelation Chapter 21

This Chapter marks the beginning of a transition from the darkness of Hell to the extreme brightness of Heaven. The subject matter of this chapter, which continues on into the first part of Chapter 22, is so ethereal – so otherworldly – that we often find it extremely difficult to grasp with our mortal minds. At two places in these two chapters, we find that what John was seeing, hearing, and recording seemed so extraordinary to him that God had to remind him that all of it was really faithful and true (cf. Re. 21:5; 22:6).

As we go forward into this exposition, a certain amount of hyperbolic license would seem to be justified in an attempt to plumb its depths; but within this Commentary section, we shall make every effort to keep any speculative analysis of the text to an absolute minimum in order to stay true to the literal text as it is written.[410]

A New Heaven and a New Earth Created

> **"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"** (Re.21:1).

In his vision, John saw a New heaven and a New earth, suddenly appear before him. For that to have occurred, the old heavens and the old earth must have first passed away into oblivion, as John clearly states. The Apostle Peter described this catastrophic event in his second epistle as follows:

> ***"[10]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***

[410]Because Scripture is largely silent concerning what the eternal life of the redeemed in Heaven will be like, a highly theoretical discussion of Heaven has been included within an Addendum Article on page 657 in which we explore the extended properties and benefits of Heaven.

> ***be burned up.*** [11]*Seeing* ***then*** *that* ***all these things shall be dissolved, what manner*** *of persons* ***ought ye to be in*** *all* ***holy conversation and godliness,*** [12]***looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"*** (2Pe.3:10-12).

As the physical heavens and the old earth melt away with a fervent heat, some would understand this event as referring to the "end of the world." Only in a narrow subjective physical sense is that true. "World" must be understood in its greater sense as the vast eternal sphere, domain, and economy in which God subsists, rules, creates, and continually renews.

Scripture speaks of God's eternal domain as "Heaven," which must be differentiated from the physical universe that is referred to as "the heavens." Within that vast eternal world of Heaven are angels and other intelligent creatures that God has fashioned – including redeemed mankind. Therefore, when the physical universe is destroyed, God's domain, the greater world, and all that is contained within it will continue on.

Therefore, we should not understand the destruction of the old physical universe and the subsequent creation of a new cosmos containing a New earth as an end and a beginning. Instead, it should be better understood as a transition from an old creation, soiled and spoiled by iniquity, to a New Creation far better and superior to the old in which only righteousness will prevail.

The old heavens and the old earth has had one long sad history of unrighteousness and has borne the scars of God's necessarily harsh judgment for the continual failure of his creation to comply with his divine will. All of that insidious iniquity shall forever pass away with the disintegration of the old creation. This entire renovation will take place within God's world that has no beginning or end.

Regarding the promised arrival of this new creation, Peter added,

> ***"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwell***

righteousness" (2Pe.3:13).

Righteousness will fully prevail within the New Creation, for all unrighteousness will have passed away with the old creation. The Old-Testament prophet Isaiah had also seen this day from afar off as the Word of God had come to him saying,

> ***"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind"*** (Is.65:17).

Any and all remembrance of the old creation will find no place within the new Eternal Era, which God will suddenly usher in out of the empty dense darkness that will have remained after the old earth and the old heavens, including its sun and moon, had been dissolved in an extremely intense heat. Only God's Word will span the empty gap between the old and the New Creation. As the Lord Jesus Himself said,

> ***"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"*** (Mt. 24:35; cf. Mk.13:31; Lu.21:33).

Returning again to the text of Revelation 21:1 we read that "There was no sea (*thalassa* in the Greek). The word "sea" found here can be metaphorically interpreted as "space" or "expanse" that no longer exists as the old creation passes away. Conversely, a literal interpretation would require us to conclude that this refers to the New earth, which will consist of but one continuous land mass – although there could possibly be numerous lakes and many small spring-fed rivers existing upon it, much as did the old earth before the great flood of Noah's day.[411]

The New Jerusalem Comes Down From God

> **"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"** (Re.21:2).

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[411]It is entirely possible that the old earth had originally consisted of but one continental land-mass surrounded by a great sea before the great deluge had divided it into the familiar continents and oceans of today (cf. Newsletter Article August 2015).

Immediately after the appearance of the New earth, John saw the Holy City, a New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven. This New Jerusalem, although having the same name, will be quite different than the old earthly Jerusalem. John noted that the appearance of this city was extremely beautiful, much as the appearance of a bride that is greatly adorned on her wedding day for her awaiting husband. This city is in fact the eternal abode of the Church, the bride of Christ, immaculately dressed within her glorious ramparts.

God and Redeemed Mankind to Dwell Together

> **"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"** (Re.21:3).

The great voice that John heard out of Heaven could be that of God the Father speaking from his throne within the New Jerusalem (cf. verse 5 below). However the second-person pronouns used in this verse would indicate that another speaks for Him. If so, that voice could most likely be the voice of the archangel Gabriel, who has often made major pronouncements for Him (cf. Lu. 1:19).

Adam's sin had alienated man from God, their Creator, such that there could be no direct habitation possible between them – lest sinful man would be immediately consumed by God's fierce Holiness. An intermediary was required to act as a buffer between them. Under the Old Covenant, which God had established with the nation of Israel, the glory of God's presence was first established within a tenuous wilderness tabernacle – a fragile tent.[412] Later on, God's glory was established in the more substantial Temple, a beautiful structure[413] that had portrayed the

[412] The word "tabernacle" is *skēnē* here in the Greek, signifying a tent or a place of habitation.

[413]This beautiful Temple was later destroyed by Babylon because of Israel's perpetual continuation in sin.

majesty of Christ, who became the ultimate intermediary between God and Man.

In this New Creation, God will reestablish his permanent habitation among mankind through the person of Christ Jesus, and all of redeemed mankind shall become his people. He shall live among them as *Emanuel* (i.e. "God with us"), and He will establish within redeemed mankind not only his glory, but his eternal presence – that can never be lost or taken away.

> **"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"** (Re.21:4)**.**

The former things that were part of the old sin-filled creation will have passed away; death and the grave will have been cast into the lake of fire and is no more (cf. Re.20:14). Neither can there be any more pain, sorrow, or crying, which sin had wrought through the condemnation of Adam's race; for the curse of sin is no more. God will wipe away all tears from the eyes of his redeemed, as all remembrance of prior trials and sufferings are completely wiped clean – as if they had never happened.

> **"[5]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. [6]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"** (Re. 21:5,6)**.**

As wonderful as will be the passing away of all the enmity, pain and turmoil of the former things, God the Creator declares from his throne that He now makes all things new; not just some things, but all things. "New" here does not merely imply a chronological replica of the old creation, but a novel and untarnished creation that is far better than the old ever was. The New heaven and the New earth will be totally unblemished by the sinful history of the old earth, which will have passed

away into oblivion. This is such an amazing concept that God the Father directs John to write this down as being "true and faithful," for He who has spoken it is the Alpha and Omega the beginning and end of all Truth.

In the old creation, prevailing sin had prohibited man from partaking of the water of life. In their fallen state, man had sought an assumed false state of self-righteousness, such that death had ruled over them. In the New Creation, man will never again thirst after righteousness, for they will have received an imputed true righteousness from Jesus Christ in great abundance. Thus in the New Creation, fully redeemed man will freely drink of the fountain of the water of eternal life such that they shall live forever.

Although it may be difficult for us as mere mortals living in this age to fully understand this New Creation, there can be no question about God's intent or ability to do exactly as He has stated here in this revelation to John.

> **"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son"** (Re.21:7)**.**

He that overcomes shall inherit all things contained within the New Creation, for he will be adopted as God's son. No natural man or woman[414] can "overcome" all of the terrible things existing within their fallen nature through their own strength, for as sin-filled descendants of Adam they have none. Those that overcome will do so through their belief and trust in Christ alone, who continues to work within them to regenerate their minds through the Holy Spirit. This comes about through the express will of God, as his chosen ones receive a spiritual rebirth, thus making of them new creatures who are alive in Christ. Here we see the culmination of the Holy Spirit's great redemptive work.

> **"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**

[414]Son is *uihos* in the Greek that establishes a close kinship as a child or son. cf. Man and Woman Created as a Complementary Entity, page 101.

lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Re.21:8)**.**

The things that the redeemed have overcome through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit are listed here. The first two are fearfulness and obstinate unbelief that will lose all their hold on the redeemed to be replaced by assurance and trust as the perfect love of Christ drives out all fear. For,

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1Jn. 4:18).

The reprobate continue to fear God, for they do not trust his Word. In doing so, they come to despise their fellow men, and ultimately become "murderers,[415] whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars." In their fearful denial of the grace of God, the unbelieving embrace those abominable activities that totally debase them; ultimately driving them away from any hope of God's loving providence, and rendering them totally unfit for Heaven. They become dead in their trespasses and sin. Their final destination must be within the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second and final death of the reprobate.[416]

The Holy City, the Lamb's Wife

"And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Re.21:9).

Again, we read that one of the seven angels who had administered one of the seven last plagues approaches John and beckoned him to come with him to see "the bride, the Lamb's wife."

"[10]And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and

[415] cf. Mt.5:21,22.

[416] cf. The Second Death, page 396.

> **high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, [11]having the glory of God: and her light** *was* **like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal"** (Re.21:10,11).

John was swept away by the angel in his spirit to a great and high place. From there, he saw the Holy Jerusalem, as it was descending down out of Heaven from God. The "Lamb's wife" is the Church of the redeemed, whose abode is within this Holy City, and whose gleaming glory is evidenced within the beautiful crystal stones making up the city's jasper walls. It is in appearance as a huge glittering diamond.[417]

The word "descending" in this verse is *katabainō* in the Greek, which was translated "coming down" in verse 2 above. The Holy City appears to be suspended above the earth at some great distance, allowing John who had been spiritually transported to this "high mountain" to observe all of its massive size as it approached.

Description of the Holy City's wall, and Gates

> **"[12]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: [13]On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.** (Re.21:12,13)**.**

From a great distance, John saw a great high wall completely surrounding the city, which had a total of twelve gates, each attended by an angel. Each of the gates was specifically designated to permit entry to a particular tribe of Israel, for they had their tribal names inscribed upon them.

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[417]This huge glittering diamond is often represented today by the sparkling solitaire diamond of an engagement ring, which is worn as a promise of abiding love given by a man to a bride who is soon to become the man's wife through marriage.

The gates were arranged in four groups of three, one group on each of four sides of the city.[418] The four directions (east, north, south, and west) are seen to correspond to the earlier assigned positions of the encampments of the twelve tribes of Israel around the tabernacle, when they were on their wilderness march (cf. Nu. 2:1-34). Each tribe will find its own entrance into the great city in that same order.

Description of the Holy City's Foundations

> **"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb"** (Re.21:14).

The great wall about the city was built upon twelve foundations, and written upon each of them was the name of one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus. A question immediately arises here concerning Matthias and Saul called Paul as being the twelfth apostle.

Matthias had been chosen by lot to replace Judas Iscariot, who had betrayed Christ. Peter saw this as necessary to provide a unique apostolic witness of Jesus' resurrection to each of the twelve tribes of Israel whose representatives had arrived in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

> ***"[23]And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. [24]And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, [25]That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. [26]And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles*** (Ac. 1:23-26).[419]

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[418] Inasmuch as John could see all four sides of the city, it could be assumed that the city was slowly rotating as it hung in space,

[419] Apparently Justus and Matthias were of the same tribe as was Judas. It has been generally assumed that Judas was from the tribe of Dan, the first tribe of Israel to fall away into idolatry.

Matthias had not been personally called by Jesus, as were all of the other apostles. Nevertheless, Matthias was counted among the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, so as to represent all of the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Ac. 2:9,10). We have no Scriptural text stating that this decision was ever revoked; therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the Apostles represented by the gates are "Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite," (cf. Mt. 10:2-4) and, replacing Judas Iscariot – the Apostle Matthias.

The Apostle Paul was not one of the twelve, nor was he ever numbered with the twelve Apostles, nor was he present among them on the day of Pentecost when the Church was born. The Lord later chose Saul of Tarsus (i.e. Paul), who had earlier persecuted the Church, not as an Apostle to the Jews, but as an Apostle at large to the Gentiles even as one "born out of due time" (cf. Ac.9:15,16; 1Co.15:8).

The inclusion of Mathias in the foundation, as we discussed above, cannot in any way diminish the huge contribution that the Apostle Paul made, as he had built upon that completed Jewish foundation through his far-reaching evangelistic efforts to reach the Gentiles with the Gospel. In that way, Paul had greatly contributed to the building of the walls of the Holy City, as stone-upon-stone – one after another. – redemption had come to the Gentiles. For this great service, Saul called Paul, who had once persecuted both Jesus and his Church, has now received the victor's crown of imputed righteousness leading to eternal life in Christ (cf. 2Ti:4:8).

Stones are still being added to the walls today as the Gospel reaches the Elect through modern day evangelism. Thus, we find Paul's name and work symbolized within the massive walls representing the Gentile Church, which rests upon the firm foundation of the twelve Apostles.[420]

[420]cf. Height and Substance of the City's Wall below.

Overall Dimensions and Configuration of the Celestial City

> **"[15]And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. [16]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.** (Re.21:15-16)**.**

Although John had earlier viewed the Celestial City from a distance as it had descended, he could not have been immediately aware of its immense size. The angel that had brought him to the mountain measured the city with a golden reed as John observed. The city measured foursquare, thus indicating a geometric square. The length and the breadth of it were each twelve thousand furlongs. The English word "furlong" is translated from the Greek word *stadion*: meaning the distance of a race course or a "stadium length." A *stade,* or foot race, in ancient Roman times was equivalent in length to today's furlong of 220 yards, or an eighth of a mile. Accordingly, the 12,000 *stadions*, as was measured by the angel, divided by eight is 1500 miles (about 2400km). Thus, each side of this Celestial City was 1500 miles, and the entire city encompassed an area of two and a quarter million square miles.[421]

Astonishingly, the height of the Holy City was also about 1500 miles! Although present-day cities on earth have many so-called "skyscrapers," none even come close to approaching this great height; for, they would crumble and fall under their own weight.[422]

Overall, the city approximates a cube, which we take note was the precise shape of the Holy of Holies within the earthly temple. This city

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[421] It must be noted that Jerusalem today encompasses but 48.3 square miles. The cube-shaped Heavenly City one side of which is two and one quarter million square miles also dwarfs in size every other city found on earth. Today, the largest city by land area is Hulunbuir, China, which encompasses about 100,000 square miles. The second largest city outside of China is Altamira, Brazil, which encompasses about 60,000 square miles.

is the true abode of God that the Holy of Holies symbolized. We also note that the Celestial City has nearly the same volume as the earth's present-day moon. In fact if the moon were a hollow sphere, the city, viewed as a cube, would fit almost perfectly within it – its eight corners touching the inside surface of the sphere.

Height and Substance of the City's Wall

> **"[17]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. [18]And the building of the wall of it was** ***of*** **jasper: and the city** ***was*** **pure gold, like unto clear glass"** (Re. 21:17,18)**.**

The great wall surrounding the city, measured about 215 to 250 feet in height (i.e. 144 cubits, based upon the varying length of a man's arm), as it was observed by the angel. It was built upward upon the foundation and extended all around the perimeter of the massive city. While the walls of earthly cities were built to protect against enemy invasion from the outside world, the purpose of this wall is quite different since no enemies will exist in that Eternal Age. Instead, the wall defines and adorns the boundaries of this wondrous Holy City with its great beauty. The wall was made of jasper (Greek, *iaspis*), which is a precious rare gem of indefinite color – perhaps brightly multicolored, yet often appearing as a clear diamond as the colors blend together.

The Celestial City itself "was pure gold, like unto clear glass;" that is, it is made of some pure transparent substance that was golden in color. Due to its great height, the city's structure could be seen standing high above its jasper walls.

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[422]We find that this Holy City had been constructed within Heaven itself, and was then sent down intact toward the New earth. Therefore, we cannot be certain about the existence of gravity or its effects within this New Creation.

Description of the City's Colorful Foundations

John described the striking colors of the precious stones decorating the twelve foundations, which are visible beneath the walls that rest upon them, as follows:

> **"[19]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; [20]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"** (Re.21:19,20)**.**

Jasper (Greek *iaspis*) appears as clear and bright as a diamond; sapphire (Greek *sappheiros*) is deep blue; chalcedony (Greek *calkedon*) is a light green; emerald (Greek *smaragdos*) is a deep dark green; sarsonyx (Greek *sardonux*) is white with streaks of red; sardis (Greek *sardios*) is fiery red; chrysolite (Greek *chrusolithos*) is golden yellow; beryl (Greek *berullos*) is sea green; topaz (Greek *topazion*) is greenish yellow; chrysoprasus (Greek *chrusoprasos*) is a golden green; jacinth (Greek *huakinthi*) is violet; and amethyst (Greek *amethustos*) is purple. Thus, every color of the rainbow that surrounds God's throne is replicated here supporting the city walls (cf. Re.4:3).

As we have previously determined, those foundations represent the twelve Apostles of our Lord (cf. Re.21:14). Each of those individual colors represents the work and life of one of the Apostles that uniquely differ from that of the others; yet combined together as one they form this beautiful array of color. The Gospel of Truth as it was presented by the twelve Apostles is indeed beautiful to contemplate, and here we observe it represented in all its splendor as the firm foundation upon which the New Jerusalem rests.[423]

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[423]It is difficult for us to envision where the foundations of a city shaped as a cube hanging in space should be placed. While it is generally assumed that those twelve foundations are placed on top of each other under one side of the cube, representing its base, it is quite possible that each

Substance of the City's Gates and Street

> **"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"** (Re.21:21)**.**

Each of the gates to the city were made of one huge pearl. Symbolically, a pearl represents the intense suffering that had produced it. Here it represents the intense suffering of Christ, who had made entrance into Heaven by fallen men possible (cf. Mt.13:45,46).

There appears to be but one major street or avenue within the city,[424] which apparently branches out so as to connect to all of the twelve gates. It is likely that the branches could be arranged as spokes of a wheel leading to a "hub" at the center of the city, wherein the throne room of God stands. As is the remainder of the city, this great street is made of a transparent substance having a glassy golden color that is as rich as pure gold.

God and the Lamb are the City's Temple

> **"[22]And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. [23]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"** (Re.21:22,23)**.**

There is no Temple, or Temple complex, located within the eternal Holy City. While the earthly Temple in Jerusalem had required an animal sacrifice as a symbolic act of atonement for the continuing sin of mortal mankind, this requirement for an animal sacrifice had passed away with the singular, ultimate, and final sacrifice of Jesus' own body upon the cross. It had fully atoned for man's sin once for all.

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foundation is built separately as one of the twelve edges of the cube.

[424] Considering the massive size of the city and its great population, it is likely that there will be many lesser main streets and side streets branching off from this one great wide highway.

Within one transitional generation following the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the earthly Temple had been utterly destroyed by God through the human agencies of Roman armies in AD 70. For many centuries thereafter all but a small remnant of Jews had stubbornly rejected the conclusiveness of that destruction – until Christ had returned in the Millennium to redeem a far greater remnant.

Within this new eternal creation, sin will no longer exist, nor will there be any remembrance of it – nor of the old Temple and the animal sacrifices for sin that it had required – for "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

In this Eternal Era, mankind's fellowship with God will no longer be attained through the distorted lens of a man-made physical Temple, nor will it anymore be gained through shadowy symbols, rituals, and ceremonies as if viewed through a darkened glass[425] – for God the Father and Christ the Lamb constitute the Temple of the New Jerusalem. God's presence will be actual and his glory actual, not merely a projected presence symbolized within material things, nor exercised in functional religion. Inasmuch as God has established his permanent habitation with a fully redeemed mankind, fellowship and communication with God in this new eternal era will be quite personal and intimate, directly conducted face-to-face, God to man and man to God through Jesus Christ (cf. Re.22:4).

The Glory of God and the Lamb Illuminates the Entire Earth

God is pure light that dispels all darkness leaving no shadow (cf. 1Jn.1:5). So bright will be God's presence, that there will be "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine" upon the New Jerusalem. We read in the prophecy of Isaiah to the believing Jews of his day that

> "[19]***The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy***

[425]cf. 1Co. 13:12.

> ***God thy glory.*** [20]***Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended"*** (Is. 60:19,20).

The intense glory of God's continuing presence, along with that of Christ, the Lamb, will abundantly provide all of the light needed for those within that great city as an "everlasting light."

> **"**[24]**And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.** [25]**And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.** [26]**And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it"** (Re. 21:24-26).

Believing Jews, who were redeemed in the Millennium, will be reestablished upon the New earth. Moreover, there will be many Gentile nations present consisting of those and their descendants who had not participated in the final rebellion of Satan at the end of the Millennial Age. They also will be reestablished upon the New earth, which will be continuously illuminated by the great light radiating outward from the New Jerusalem. The kings and rulers of the earth will joyfully bring their glory and honor into the city as an offering to the Great King.

> **"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither** *whatsoever* **worketh abomination, or** *maketh* **a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life"** (Re.21:27)**.**

Although the gates to the city are always open, nothing or no one can ever enter into the city that would defile it. There will be none roaming about inside or outside who engages in abominable activities or speaks Satan's iniquitous lies; all of those who remain within this new eternal era are sanctified saints, whose names will have been found written down in the Lamb's Book of Life long before the foundation of the old earth was established (cf. Re.3:5). ○

Revelation Chapter 22

Prior to this current place in our text, everything in the New Jerusalem has been presented as a stationary infrastructure made of hard material substances; yet having a spiritual aspect to them, which makes it very difficult for us to define them in earthly terms. In verse 1 of this chapter the angel, who has been guiding John, now shows him a moving river. This river consists of the "water of life," which perpetually flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb:

The Water of Life

> **"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb** (Re.22:1).

Through his suffering and shed blood, Jesus Christ has made this permanent cohabitation of God and mankind in Heaven possible. For this, Christ is highly exalted and now sits at the right hand of his Father in Heaven. Thus, we find that God's throne is repeatedly referred to as it is here as: "the throne of God and of the Lamb."

"Water," as it is found in this verse, has been translated from the Greek word *hudōr*, which can be interpreted literally or figuratively as it is in this verse. This "pure river of water of life" flowing out of the throne is not ordinary water, consisting of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen, but is rather a supernatural "living water."

While yet upon the earth, Jesus spoke of the existence of this "living water" to a woman He had met at Jacob's well:

> ***"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water"*** (Jn.4:10).

When the woman confused this living water with ordinary well water, "Jesus answered and said unto her,

> ***"[13]Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: [14]But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"*** (Jn. 4:13,14).

This river of life proceeding from the throne of God can be likened to the Holy Spirit who comes forth from the Father and the Son to quicken, nourish, and sustain redeemed mankind's soul in this life upon this present earth. Within the New Creation, this living water is viewed as tangible, touchable and drinkable by the redeemed, thus producing in them "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." In keeping with the overall translucency of this holy city, this river of living water is as clear as crystal, which depicts its pure and deep spiritual quality, which is required to sustain the lives of those within the New Creation.

The Tree of Life

> **"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"** (Re. 22:2).

All along the street leading to the throne, and on either side of the river of life that flowed from it, was the tree of life. The Eden on earth had consisted of a garden of trees yielding nourishing fruit. The tree of life had been made abundantly available to Adam, until access to the garden was denied him and all of his future descendants because of Adam's grievous fall into sin.

Thereafter, the way to the tree of life was heavily guarded by two powerful cherubim, each wielding a flaming sword of judgment, thus keeping the way to eternal life undefiled and protected for a future redeemed human race to enter (cf. Ge.3:22-24). Consequently, death loomed over and eventually befell every man from Adam on – until the

way of eternal life was restored to the redeemed and sanctified followers of Jesus Christ through the power of his resurrection.

Here in this Heavenly Eden, we are told that the tree of life grows in great abundance. It perpetually yields twelve different kinds of fruit within regular monthly intervals.[426] While the fruit of this tree provides nourishment of eternal life for the individual man, its leaves are intended as a balm for the health of the nations on the New earth so that they can exist in a perpetual state of righteousness. All of that which was denied mankind after Adam's fall into sin will be restored to those making up the redeemed of the nations upon the New earth.

Notable by its absence is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan had used its presence within the Eden of old to ensnare Adam and to infuse all mankind with his iniquity (cf. Ge.3:6) by encouraging evil over good. In this new eternal era, mankind's knowledge of good and evil will have been fully sanctified in Christ, such that evil no longer has any attraction or hold upon men. Thus, there will be no trace of sin remaining within the sanctified redeemed of mankind who populate this great eternal world.

The Servants of God

> **"[3]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: [4]and they shall see his face; and his name** *shall be* **in their foreheads"** (Re.22:3,4).

Along with the total absence of sin, the curse of death as the necessary penalty for sin will be no more. Moreover, the throne of God and of the Lamb, centrally located within the New Jerusalem, will be readily

[426] It should be noted that the inspired text clearly refers to a monthly interval (Greek, *mane*). In the Eden of old, a month corresponded to a period of time signified by the completed phases of the moon – each month beginning with a new moon. In this new creation, there will be no moon and thus no discernible monthly period of time; in the Eternal Ages earth-time has no meaning. Therefore, "month" as it is stated here must refer to this tree as it had once produced fruit in the Eden of old, but which now delivers fruit in recurrent perpetual abundance within the New Jerusalem.

accessible to all of redeemed mankind. Here in this verse we find saints in Heaven are referred to as the "servants of God"[427] who serve before the Throne, and with that service we find that a great privilege has been granted to them. No mortal man can look upon the face of God and live (cf. Ex.33:20), but within this New Creation, the curse of death is no more. Mortal man has fully put on immortality and now resides in incorruptible flesh (cf. 1Co.15:53), which is perfectly suited for life in this eternal Heavenly realm.

Of course, to see the face of Christ is also to look upon the face of the Father through Him (cf. Jn.14:9), but in a way that is beyond our present understanding, immortal men will actually be able to see the face of the Father, who is a pure spirit, and come to know Him as He truly is and shall joyfully serve Him – for "his name shall be written in their foreheads."

We read earlier in Chapter 14 that a remnant of devout Jews had the name of the Father of Christ the Lamb written in their foreheads:

> **"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"** (Re. 14:1).

Therefore, it would seem evident that the servants who see his face and serve here before the throne are the same sealed Jews that had earlier served Him on earth through their powerful witness of the Gospel of Christ's Kingdom. Moreover, many other Jews, having been redeemed and trained for this great service during the Millennial Age, will reinforce their ranks from their place of habitation upon the New earth.[428]

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[427]A question often arises among Christians regarding those who serve here before the throne. Most certainly the Church as Christ's beloved wife, who is forever present at his side, will adore and worship Christ in this New Jerusalem; but she will not minister before the throne as do those we find here, which are referred to as servants of God; hence, these are best interpreted to be the redeemed of Israel.

[428] cf. Addendum Article The Millennial Temple, sub-topic Re-institution of the Mosaic System, page 624.

God Provides Eternal Light for his Creation

> **"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"** (Re.22:5)**.**

Our God is a consuming fire, an infinitely intense blinding light; and within Him and in his presence is no darkness or shifting shadow possible (cf. De.4:24; 1Jn.1:5). Unlike the old earth, there will be no sun needed to illuminate the New earth, for God's glory will illuminate his entire creation from His divine presence within the Holy City. Again, we read that there is no night, no darkness, to be found anywhere within the New Jerusalem, nor for that matter anywhere upon the New earth, which will be likewise infused by God's light forever.

Therefore, the New Eternal Era will consist of one never-ending day; it will not be necessary that anyone carry a candle or other device to light their path, for God bestows upon mankind his own light to emanate through and from them, such that there can be no shadow of darkness surrounding the redeemed. The glorified residents of this new creation will reign with the Lord God forever within that divine light.

These Sayings are Faithful and True

> **"And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done"** (Re. 22:6)**.**

All that we have read and studied in this text concerning the eternal era seems so esoteric that we find it very difficult for our mortal minds to process it all. Even as John wrote it down, he must have found it difficult to accept as factual reality. For that reason, the angel again assures John that all he has seen and heard are faithful and true; none of this is a mere figment of John's imagination. It is not only true, but God is also faithful to carry out everything exactly as it is stated within this Revela-

tion. It was the "Lord God" (i,e. Christ), who had earlier sent the holy prophets, who has now sent his personal messenger to inform John and his many other servants about the things "which must shortly be done."

This same information has been preserved and made available to us who live in this far flung age through the written text of this great document, in order that we too may not be ignorant of the things that must very shortly come to pass.

Blessed are Those Who Keep this Prophecy

> **"Behold, I come quickly: blessed** *is* **he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book"** (Re.22:7)**.**

At this place in the Heavenly vision, John again hears the voice of the glorified Christ assuring him that He is truly coming again, and that when He does, He will come very quickly. His coming will be as sudden and as unexpected as a great lightning strike and thunder clap that will echo over the entire earth in a mere moment of time.

Jesus also reassures John regarding all of the things he had seen, had heard, and had written down by saying, "blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." The English word translated "keep" in this verse is *tēreō* in the Greek, which means that we must protect this prophecy from alteration, loss, or injury by closely guarding its text.

That certainly does not mean that we should store it away in a dark closet, for it is an open book containing an important message for all of mankind concerning things that are certain to occur. Therefore, we must not keep its content a secret for our own personal edification, but must make it universally available to both the Jew and the Gentile who urgently need to hear and heed its Words.

> **"[8]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 shewed me these things. [9]Then saith he unto me, See** ***t****hou 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" (Re.22:8,9)**.**

Having heard the voice of the glorified Christ, John fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that had shown him all of these things. Again, the angel needed to admonish John not to do that. We must always take care to direct our worship to God alone, for all else is idolatry. As amazing as an angel may appear to mortal men, they are nevertheless created beings, as are we. They are "fellow-servants" of God as are John's brethren, the Apostles; the prophets of old; and all true believers who diligently keep the sayings of this book of the Revelation.

The Immutability of this Prophecy

"[10]And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. [11]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" (Re. 22:10,11)**.**

Unlike portions of the prophecy of Daniel, which God had ordered to be sealed until a future age in which it could be understood, the Revelation was not to be sealed – for the time in which its prophecy was to be fulfilled was "near at hand" – even at the very door within this present age.

Nothing recorded in this book is subject to change or revision over time; it is immutable. The unjust, which are spoken of herein, will remain unjust; and those who are spoken of as filthy (Greek, *rhupoōō* = morally dirty) will remain filthy. Likewise, the righteous man will remain righteous, and the one who is holy will remain holy – for God has pre-ordained all of this to be so from the very beginning. All will and must remain exactly as they are depicted to be within this book by the sovereign will and foreknowledge of God as this prophecy begins to unfold before us in the near future.

Jesus' Reward is with Him

> **"[12]And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward** *is* **with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. [13]I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last"** (Re:22,12,13)**.**

Jesus reiterates that He will surely come quickly (cf. Re. 22:7) – without delay, not slowly or with any hesitation. When He comes, He will reward every man and woman according to the works that he or she has accomplished on his behalf while they had sojourned upon the earth. He will recompense the works of the righteous[429] with his eternal favor and the works of the unjust with eternal condemnation.

Early on within the Revelation, John had quoted Jesus as saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Re.1:8).[430] The source of that earlier quotation, which was stated by the eternal Christ and reiterated by John, is found here as the Revelation comes to an end.

> **"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"** (Re. 22:14)**.**

As we previously observed, the gates to the Holy City are each named for one of the twelve tribes, thus designating their assigned way of entrance into the new Jerusalem. Therefore, those who are referred to here, who obey his commandments and regularly enter through the gates into the city, are redeemed Jews.[431] They will make periodic visits to the

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[429]The works of the righteous refers to "works of faith" (cf. Ja. 2:14-26), which is only made possible by the indwelling Holy Spirit providing the motivation to perform good works within the redeemed (cf. Ep. 2:10).

[430]cf. page 115.

[431]The Holy City is the home of the Church, but it can be assumed that they can freely come and go to the New earth whensoever the need arises.

New Jerusalem from their home cities upon the New earth to gain access to God's throne. Their earthly cities will likely be arranged upon the New earth, corresponding to the location of their own particular gate, as were their wilderness camps around the Tabernacle (cf. Nu. 2:1-34; page 404).

> **"For without** *are* **dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie"** (Re.22:15)**.**

"Dogs" was the common term used by Jews for unbelieving Gentiles.[432] The description given here characterized the peoples of the Gentile nations that had sought to destroy them. Of such were the Assyrians and the Babylonians that had killed many and taken others captive to serve as slaves. Today's nation of Israel remains surrounded by her modern-day enemies. This verse assures the redeemed Jew that none such as those can ever again harm them or ever enter to destroy this New Jerusalem. As we have previously read, all "sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters," and liars will now be far removed from the Holy City; they are in fact forever suffering for their evil deeds within the lake of fire deep within the outer darkness (cf. Re. 20:14,15).

Jesus, the Davidic Root of the Jew and the Light of the Gentile

> **"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"** (Re.22:16)**.**

At this place in the document, the angel messenger departs, and the great vision comes to an end. The glorified Christ again appears to John, as he finds himself again on the isle of Patmos where his amazing spiritual journey had begun. Jesus assures John that He had sent the angel as his personal envoy, who had guided and testified to John concerning all

[432]Dogs in those days were all wild and vicious. They were nothing like the domesticated companionable dogs of today in which much of their wild nature has been bred out of them.

of these future things – so that he could in turn testify and make them evident to all of the churches. Today, we of the contemporary Church are still being edified through the reading and studying of this great document that John had recorded, exactly as he had been directed nearly two millennia ago.

Jesus then certifies to John that He is "the root and the offspring of David;" that is, He is the Messiah that Israel had so long-awaited. This forever identifies Him with Israel, God's chosen people of old. Jesus is also "the bright and morning star" that signals a new and bright day in which righteousness shall shine over the earth (cf. Mal. 4:2).

This new day had begun with the New Covenant that was written in his blood. Therefore, Jesus is also a great light unto the Gentiles, their Emanuel, who now walks among and within them through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Through his death and resurrection He redeemed them to become his beloved bride, the Church, which had been taken from his own body – even as Eve was taken from Adam's body (cf. Ge.2:21-23).

The Threefold Invitation to "Come"

> **"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** (Re. 22:17)**.**

The word "Spirit" in this verse refers to the Holy Spirit, who first revealed our sin to us, and then called us to come and to receive salvation in Jesus Christ, who alone is the way, the Truth, and the source of life eternal. The bride, his Church, likewise bears witness through the Word of the Gospel, inviting all men to come and to receive Him as their savior. Secondly, "let him that heareth say, Come." Not only is this an invitation for those that heed the Spirit and the bride's invitation to come, but through their individual witness still others are invited to come. Thirdly, any and all of those who are athirst for righteousness are invited to come (cf. Mt.5:6); for whosoever will come may freely partake of the

water of life that continually flows from the eternal throne of God and of the Lamb (cf. Re.22:1).

Jesus' Warning Against Altering this Prophecy

> **"[18]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: [19]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"** (Re.22:18,19)**.**

Jesus then issues a stern warning to all who read this Revelation and fail to heed its words as fully-settled prophecy – as the very Word of God that cannot be ignored, added to, or altered in any way.

First, we are warned not to add anything beyond that which God has revealed within this document, lest He place upon those who would do so all of the plagues spoken of in this prophecy. This is why we must always accept a precise literal interpretation of this Revelation, being very careful not to add to it through modern allegorical applications, which could in any way distort the intended meaning of the text.

Secondly, we must not ignore, remove, or disregard any part of this prophecy as being unimportant. We must accept it all in its entirety within its full context, not dismissing any part of it as irrelevant; for those who would dare take away from this prophecy will have no place in the book of life. They will have no place in the Celestial City, nor do they have any hope of receiving all of the other blessings written within this Revelation.

John's Final Testimony and Benediction

John now closes this document with his own personal words to the churches that he had so faithfully shepherded from the home church of

Ephesus – and also to us, who now study this document in this current age.

> **"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus"** (Re.22:20).

With these words John reiterates and assures his brethren, including us, that Jesus, who has testified to the truth and faithfulness of all the things contained within this document, has emphatically promised, "Surely I come quickly" (cf. Re.22:12). To that promise, John adds his own assurance that this is so with his own "Amen." Bending his own will to the divine will of God for his Son to return and to rule over the earth, he adds these words, "even so come, Lord Jesus." So say we all!

Finally the Apostle John adds a closing benediction, which was specifically intended for those believers in the seven churches at the end of the first century. Nevertheless, we as fellow believers within this current age, who have received the written record of this great vision, are likewise blessed by John's closing words:

> **"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ** *be* **with you all. Amen"** (Re.22:21)**.**

Indeed, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ reside within all of you who have faithfully read and diligently studied the full text of the Revelation; those who have agonizingly meditated upon the precise meaning and implications of its text along with us; and those who have diligently guarded the very Words of this prophecy exactly as it has been written.

As we conclude this Commentary section, let us now together with the Apostle John humbly affirm the divine source, authority, and trustworthiness of all the Words contained within this great document with our own fervent ***Amen*** **!** ●

ADDENDUM

Supplementary Articles in support of Various Propositions, asserted within the Commentary Section, Regarding the Organization and Analysis of The Revelation

Chronology of the Revelation

The Revelation document is presented in a very specific order. As such, we have followed the text within our Commentary in the order that it has been presented.[433] Nevertheless, there is not a little difficulty encountered in attempting to read the text as one long strait-forward chronological narrative due to various chronological anomalies found within the text itself. We have noted those anomalies within our Commentary as we have encountered them; but in this article, we shall more closely examine the overall chronological structure of the Revelation in an effort to eliminate any confusion surrounding the unusual arrangement of the inspired text.

Three Major Divisions of the Revelation

We begin our chronological analysis by first considering the three major divisions of this book, which are designated within the text as past, present, and future. Those three major divisions of the Revelation document are found recorded in the text of Chapter 1 verse 19, which reads as follows: "**Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.**"

John was told to write down:

1. the things that John "has seen" (past tense) concerning the glorified Christ, which he faithfully recorded in Chapter 1.
2. the "things which are" (present tense) concerning current things that John was just about to observe. Those consisted of current things that were:
   a) on earth within the Church period, which John recorded in Chapters 2 and 3.
   b) in Heaven during that same period, which John observed and recorded in Chapters 4 and 5.
3. the things "which shall be hereafter" (future tense), concerning future things that John had later observed and recorded in Chapters 6 thru 22.

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[433] cf. General Outline of the Revelation on page 105.

While John's vision of the glorified Christ is a revelation of that which John saw in the past tense, it sets the theme for the rest of the book in which Christ prepares the earth for the establishment of his Kingdom Age (cf. He.13:8).

We are presently living near the very end of the Church age, which is portrayed by the seven churches of Asia Minor in John's day. Although those churches are now in our past, they have a future chronological aspect to them that extends forward well into our day.[434]

Finally, in Chapters 6 through 22, we find ourselves involved in a very complex detailed study of the "doctrines of the last days" (i.e. Eschatology), concerning things which are yet to come to pass within a future period of time.

The Number Seven

The number "seven" represents seven things leading to the perfection or completeness of a greater thing. Because the Revelation is the culmination of all things, the number seven looms large in its text, beginning with seven golden lamp-stands representing the seven churches of Asia Minor (cf. Re.1:4,11,12). We also find seven spirits of God (cf. Re.1:4; 4:5) and later on in the text, we encounter seven mysterious thunders (cf. Re.10:3). We also encounter a scroll of seven seals (cf. Re.5:1), followed by seven angels with seven trumpets (cf. Re. 8:6), and finally seven angels with seven bowls of God's undiluted wrath (cf. Re.15:7).

The Triple Cascading Series of Sevens

Concerning the seven-sealed scroll, there is a very orderly arrangement consisting of three series of sevens that begins in Chapter 6 and runs through Chapter 16, which is presented in Illustration 4 below on page 432. The first series of seven represents the seven seals of the scroll in Heaven, as Jesus breaks open each seal in turn. The seventh and last of those seals begins a second series of seven which represents sev-

[434]cf. Future Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Churches, Commentary page 130.

en trumpet judgments. The seventh and last of those trumpets, begins the third and final series of seven. This final series represents seven bowls of God's undiluted wrath that are poured out upon the earth (cf. Re.16:1). The last of those seven bowls leads to the return of Jesus Christ to judge the nations and to establish his Kingdom age on earth.

The Secondary Narrative

All Scripture is inspired by God (cf. 2Ti.3:16) and was given to men through the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. 2Pe.1:21). The Holy Spirit commonly employs a repetitive method in which a secondary text follows to fill in and amplify a primary text. For instance, the chronological sequence of all of the creation is given in Chapter 1 of the Genesis account, and then Chapter two goes back to fill in additional details regarding the creation of man. In addition, the Book of Deuteronomy can be seen as filling in details concerning the application of the Law, which was given to Moses and recorded in Exodus. Moreover, 1st and 2nd Chronicles covers a similar historical period as does 1st and 2nd Kings. Chronicles gives God's viewpoint of that period while Kings provides man's perspective of that same period.

In like manner, the New Testament, contains four Gospels recording the person and work of Jesus Christ. Each is written from a different perspective, thus providing us with additional details of the account. The historic accounts recorded in the book of Acts are then supplemented by appreciable additional information found in the numerous epistles that follow. Therefore, it is not surprising to find this reiterative method continuing on within the text of the Revelation, wherein considerable information is given to us within a secondary narrative that runs in parallel with a primary narrative.

The primary narrative begins in Chapter 1 of the Revelation and continues throughout the document until finally coming to an end in Chapter 22. However, inserted within that primary narrative, we find a shorter parallel narrative that begins in Chapter 12 and continues on through Chapter 14. Thus, this secondary narrative constitutes a "gap" within the primary narrative that begins at the end of Chapter 11, and

concludes as the primary narrative resumes within Chapter 15. While reading the primary narrative alone by omitting Chapters 12 thru 14 gives us a sound overview of the doctrines of the last days, the secondary narrative fills in many important details that are not recorded within the primary narrative.

Parallel Summary of the Secondary Narrative

We shall now summarize texts of the secondary narrative that parallel specific chapters and texts within the primary narrative. We shall refer to the chart of Illustration 5 below on page 433 as we do so.

In Chapters 4 and 5 of the primary narrative shown in the left column of the chart, God's sovereign Kingdom stands firm in clear opposition to all efforts to spoil it. The secondary narrative shown in the right column, shows Chapter 12 in parallel with Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 12 exposes Satan's long and determined effort to usurp God's divine sovereignty and establish a Kingdom on earth for himself.

In Chapter 6 of the primary narrative, Jesus breaks open the first seal of a scroll in Heaven which will grant Him exclusive ownership of the earth and all that is contained within it (cf. 6:1-17). The four horsemen of the apocalypse[435] go forth on earth as Jesus breaks open the first four seals. Revelation 13:1-6 then parallels Revelation 6:1-17, wherein, we observe Satan as he calls forth his political Antichrist in an attempt to thwart and displace Jesus Christ as the rightful heir and Lord over the earth. This occurs within a 3 ½ year time-frame ending in a brief but severe period of intense tribulation, which will be rapidly cut short by the appearance of Christ (cf. Mt. 24:22,30). This 3 ½ year period parallels the first half of a final seven-year period on earth, as it was revealed to Daniel the prophet.[436]

In Chapter 7 of the primary narrative we find that 144,000 Jews are sealed by God to continue his redemptive work on earth just before the

[435]cf. page 196 of the Commentary.

[436]cf. Articles The Seventieth Week of Daniel, page 530 and The Great Tribulation Period, page 532.

Church is removed from the earth within the Rapture. In the secondary narrative of Chapter 13:7-18, Satan calls forth his false prophet to promote the worship of the Antichrist in an effort to fill the vacuum created by the absence of the Raptured Church. The false prophet sets up the Abomination of Desolation (cf. Mt. 24:15) within the third Temple[437] of the Jews, and demands that all peoples on earth receive the seal of the political Antichrist. This will result in a mass exodus of Jews from Jerusalem into a place of safety that God has prepared for them (cf. Mt.24:16-22).

In Chapter 8 of the primary narrative Jesus breaks open the seventh seal of the scroll in Heaven, thus giving Him absolute authority both in Heaven and upon earth. Within the secondary narrative of Chapter 14:1-5, Jesus reveals Himself to the sealed remnant of Israel as their true Messiah and prepares them to witness of Him during the second half of the final seven-year period (i.e. the Day of the Lord), during which the first four trumpet judgments will impact the earth.

In Chapter 9 of the primary narrative trumpets 5 and 6 sound. Those trumpets signal the first two of three great woeful spiritual judgments that will be experienced by the reprobate upon the earth. In the Secondary narrative of Chapter 14:6-11, we see three flying angels witnessing of the truth of the Gospel and pronouncing pending judgment upon those who have the mark of the first beast, the political Antichrist.

In Chapter 10 of the primary narrative, John mentally digests the contents of a bitter-sweet scroll offered to him by a mighty angel that reveals God's intent and purpose in his tumultuous judgments. In the secondary narrative of Chapter 14:12,13 we see the faithful patience of the saints remaining on earth whom the idol of the Antichrist has marked for certain death even as they patiently await their redemption.

In Chapter 11 of the primary narrative, God sends down two powerful witnesses to earth, who are ultimately killed by demon-possessed men. God the Father then resurrects them from the dead and recalls them just before the seventh trumpet sounds. In the secondary narrative of Chapter 14:14-20, we see the final harvest of patiently-waiting saints

[437]cf. Article, Third Temple of the Last Days, page 516.

from the earth, just as the seventh trumpet sounds to bring forth God's wrath down upon an unrepentant earth through seven bowl judgments.

At this juncture the secondary narrative comes to an end, as the primary narrative resumes in Chapter 15 with the sound of the seventh trumpet. At the sound of that last trumpet, seven angels come forth from the Temple in Heaven carrying seven bowls of God's wrath to cleanse the earth of all evil and iniquity.

Parenthetical Text of Chapters 17 and 18

In addition to the aforementioned parallel narrative, a parenthetical Text is found within Revelation Chapters 17 and 18, which provides us with considerable detail that expands upon the second half of an earlier verse found in Chapter 16:

> **"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"** (Re. 16:19).

In this one single verse we find that Jerusalem is to be divided into three parts; and that all of the great Gentile cities of the earth will fall into rubble, as the consequence of a massive global earthquake. Lastly, ancient Babylon is remembered by God, even as this future the Mystery Babylon of the Antichrist is in a similar manner about to receive the "cup of the wine of the fierceness of God's wrath." Babylon's ultimate destruction comes about as the fifth bowl of God's fierce wrath is poured out upon the seat of the Antichrist's power. The parenthetical text found in Revelation 17 describes the destruction of the false religion of Babylon[438] in greater detail, while Chapter 18 details the destruction of Babylon's great global commercial enterprise.

The primary narrative then resumes within Chapter 19 with minor chronological transitions, leading to its final conclusion at the end of Chapter 22. ■

[438]cf. Article: Babylon, the Satanic Root of False Religion, page 589.

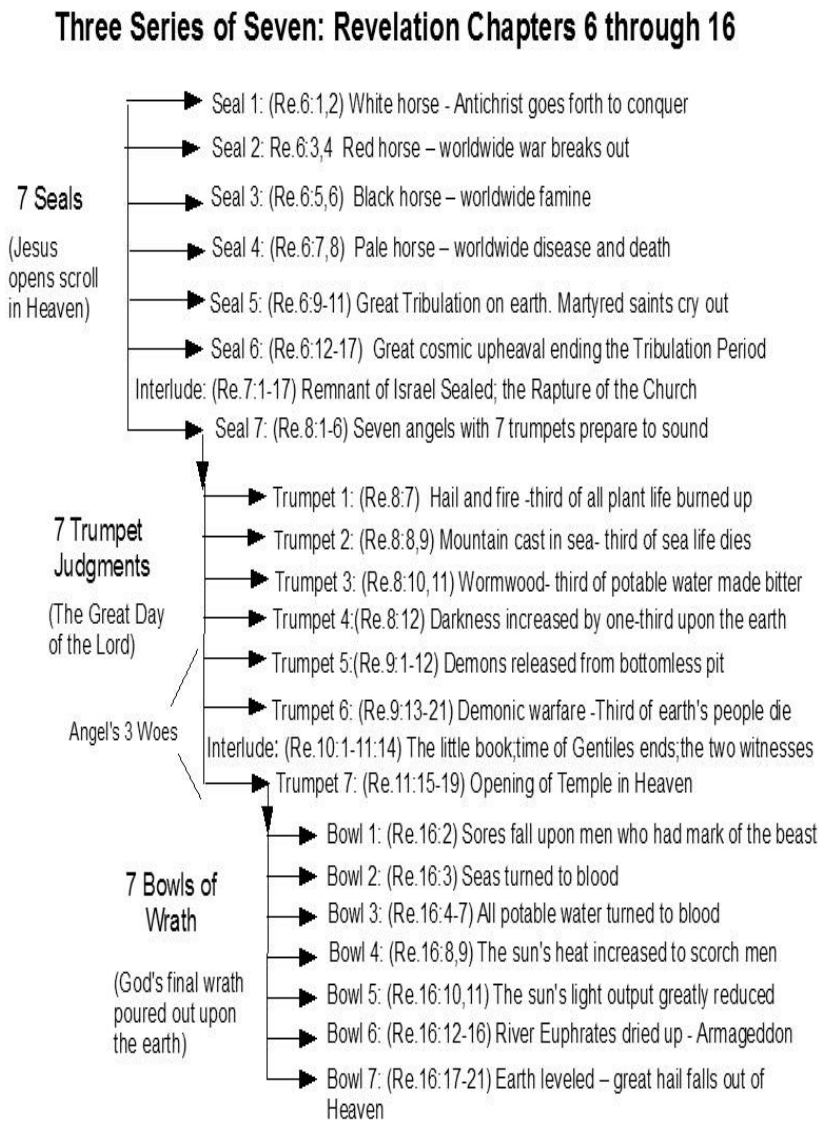

Illustration 4: Three Cascading Series of Seven

Chronology of the Revelation

Primary Narrative		Secondary Narrative	
Re. 1	The Glorified Christ Revealed. Jesus rules in the midst of his churches.		
Re. 2, 3	Jesus' Messages to the Seven Churches of Asia.		
Re. 4, 5	John Taken in the spirit to Heaven. God's Throne, 4 Beasts and 24 Elders Revealed. The Lamb Arrives to claim the Scroll.	**Re. 12**	Satan's Evil Intent Revealed to John. Satan's Rebellion and expulsion from Heaven to Earth.
Re. 6	Jesus breaks open first six Seals in Heaven. Four Horsemen go forth on Earth. Tribulation begins and is cut short by Jesus Christ.	**Re. 13: 1-6**	Satan calls forth the Antichrist, as a global dictator to establish his own kingdom on earth in opposition to God and Christ.
Re, 7	144,000 of Israel Sealed. The Rapture of the Church	**Re. 13: 7-18**	Satan Calls Forth the False Prophet. The abomination of desolation. Seal of the Beast.
Re. 8	Seventh seal of the scroll in Heaven opened and trumpets 1-4 sound.	**Re. 14:1-5**	Christ reveals Himself to sealed of Israel who witness of Him during the trumpet judgments.
Re. 9	Trumpets 5 and 6, sound and the first two of three woes are experienced upon earth.	**Re. 14:6-11**	Three flying Angels Witness of the Gospel and judgment of those having the mark of the beast.
Re 10	John "eats" a little sweet/bitter scroll offered to him by a Mighty Angel.	**Re. 14:12,13**	The patience of the saints whom the idol of the Antichrist has marked for certain death.
Re. 11	Two Witnesses arrive on earth, are Killed and ascend just before the Seventh Trumpet.	**Re. 14: 14-20**	The last Harvest of saints from the Earth. **[End of Secondary Narrative]**
Primary Gap	**[See Secondary Narrative]**		
Re. 15	Seven Angels with seven Plagues come out of the Heavenly Temple.		
Re. 16	Seventh Trumpet, Last Woe: Seven plagues poured out as seven bowls of God's Wrath. Babylon remembered by God:		
Re. 17,18	Religious Babylon Destroyed. Commercial Babylon Destroyed.		
Re. 19	Joy in Heaven. Marriage supper of the Lamb. Christ Returns to judge the Earth. Armageddon		
Re. 20	Millennial Age. Satan defeated and cast into the lake of Fire. Great White Throne judgment of the reprobate dead.		
Re. 21,22	New Heaven and New Earth formed. New Jerusalem. River of Life. The Eternal Ages begin.		

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Illustration 5: Chronology of the Revelation

Cities of the Seven Churches

In Chapters 2 and 3 of the Revelation, the Lord Jesus addressed seven messages to seven churches that were located within seven cities of Asia Minor, whose ruins are now located within the western portion of the modern nation of Turkey. Below is a simple map showing the approximate location of those cities each marked with a star. A few surrounding cities are also shown for points of reference.

In this article we shall provide a brief description of each of those ancient cities, which we had omitted in our Commentary to avoid including extraneous information that would unnecessarily distract from Jesus' messages to the seven churches. Nevertheless, this material is quite helpful as background information leading to a better understanding of the inspired text itself.

The following is a brief historical analysis and description of each of the seven cities as they had existed within New-Testament times; including an update as to how and where the remains of the ancient cities appear today. Many of those cities have had their names altered over many centuries, and all are in varying stages of ruin. We shall begin our tour with the city of Ephesus that contained the first century church in which the Apostle John was its ruling elder, and from which He acted as an overseer (i.e. a bishop) to the other six churches.

Illustration 6: Cities of the Seven Churches

The Ancient City of Ephesus

The city of Ephesus[439] was initially built somewhere around 1000 BC as an Arzawan capital by Ionian Greek colonists.[440] It had been built near an ancient wooden shrine of an Anatolian fertility goddess, Cybele (or *Kybele*), that was afterwards adopted by the Greeks for the worship of their own goddess, Artemis, in or about 550 BC. In the year 356 BC the wooden temple was burned down by an assumed arsonist, thus necessitating that it be rebuilt by the city's Greek inhabitants.

The Greek temple was subsequently rebuilt and was greatly enhanced to be much larger and far more grandiose than the original inasmuch as its construction was authorized and greatly influenced by Alexander the Great. This reconstructed temple was four times the size of the Parthenon at Athens and its roof was supported by more than 100 external columns each around 55 feet high, of which many were hand carved. The magnificent walls of the temple were constructed of Parian marble. Within the Temple was a large art gallery as well as a bank depository holding large amounts of the city's wealth.

In Roman times, the city of Ephesus contained the *Library of Celsus*, which was one of the most impressive buildings of the Roman Empire.[441] It was designed to hold 12,000 scrolls, and it also contained a mausoleum for the Roman Senator *Tiberius Julius Celsus Polemaeanus* after whom the library was named. There was a large indoor theater in the city that seated twenty-thousand people and an outdoor amphithe-

[439]This is the city in which the church of Ephesus had been founded by Apollos and the Apostle Paul. Although this church was sound in doctrine, its strict adherence to it in the face of strong opposition had hardened into legalism to the extent that the church had lost its first love for Jesus Christ and the zealous works associated with that devotion. If they would not repent, Jesus warned them that He would remove their "candlestick" out of his presence (cf. Re. 2:1-7; Commentary page 134).

[440] Some believe that this area was first inhabited by the Hitites as early as 2000 BC long before Greek settlers had arrived.

[441]This library was built in the early second century AD and was exceeded in size only by the first-largest library found in Alexandria and the second-largest found in Pergamum.

ater that seated over one-hundred thousand. Thus, the harbor city of Ephesus soon grew into a great commercial center as well as a great religious destination.

The Greek goddess, Artemis, was later known as Diana by the Romans. A large meteoric stone found near the city was said to be the image of Diana, the moon goddess, that had fallen to earth from heaven. The crude shape of this stone was sculptured into an ugly multi--breasted image of the goddess Diana, who held a club in one hand and a trident in the other. This lewd image was kept hidden behind a purple curtain within the temple of Diana, which soon became known as one of the wonders of the ancient world.

The sensuous worship of Diana in her temple was quite similar to that of the worship of Aphrodite in Corinth – both having a host of attending priestess-prostitutes. In the areas about the temple, acts of the basest forms of immorality were performed in riotous drunken orgies. Diana of the Ephesians, still recognized farther inland as the Anatolian goddess Cybele, was arguably the most worshiped of the many female idols of the ancient world. A large silversmith trade had developed around the manufacture of various shrines and images of the goddess Diana to be sold in gift shops to the many tourists who visited Ephesus on religious pilgrimages.[442] At times there were as many as two million people gathered together in Ephesus.

The Apostle Paul, while en-route from Corinth to Jerusalem by ship, spoke only briefly within a synagogue at Ephesus, whereupon he apparently left Priscilla and Aquila and continued on his journey. Following Paul's brief visit, a devout disciple of John the Baptist named Apollos arrived in Ephesus. After being informed by Aquila and Priscilla concerning the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (cf. Ac. 18:24-26), Apollos began to preach the Gospel such that many Jews began receiving Christ as their true Messiah (cf. Ac.18:28).

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[442]One of Paul's most determined adversaries was Demetrius, a silversmith whose trade had been all but decimated as the populace turned from worshiping pagan idols to the worship of the living God (cf. Ac. 19:24-41).

The Apostle Paul later arrived in Ephesus while on his third missionary journey. At that time the Gospel came in full force to the Gentiles through the teaching of the Apostle Paul in the Greek school of Tyrannus over a period of two years. It is apparent that Paul organized a missionary effort while there to reach others in and around Ephesus from a statement in which he said he was reluctant to leave Ephesus "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1Co. 16:9). The churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea were most likely established through this great missionary effort.

The Apostle John arrived in Ephesus shortly after the death of the Apostle Paul, most probably around AD 68, whereupon he took over the pastorate of the church there; and from which, he also oversaw the other six churches addressed in Chapters 2 and 3 of the Revelation. John was imprisoned on the small island of Patmos in or about AD 96 during the severe persecutions of the Roman emperor Domitian.

Inasmuch as Jesus had left his mother, Mary, within John's care as He was being crucified (cf. Jn.19:26,27), it is often speculated that Mary arrived in Ephesus with John where she later died and was buried within that city. However, simple mathematics would indicate that Mary would have been approaching 90 years of age when John left Jerusalem for Ephesus, thus making the trip vary arduous for her – assuming that she was still living. For that reason, it seems most probable that she had died before John had left for Ephesus and that her body had been interred in Israel long before the Roman siege had destroyed the Holy City in AD 70.[443]

The city of Ephesus was destroyed by the Goths in AD 253. Although it was later rebuilt, it never again became the great commercial center that it once was. The great harbor soon became silted over by the *Kaystros River* that flowed into it, thus rendering it unusable. What remained of the rebuilt city was thereafter destroyed by an earthquake in AD 614. Today the ancient city of Ephesus lies in ruins near the Turkish

[443]There is even less evidence for the assumption that the body of Luke, the physician, is interred in Ephesus.

village of *Selcuk*, and it has become one of the largest archaeological sites in the eastern Mediterranean.

The Ancient City of Smyrna

The city of Smyrna[444] was located about 35 miles north-west of Ephesus. Like Ephesus, Smyrna was an important port city on or very near the Aegean Sea (cf. map above). An ancient Aeolian settlement was founded in 11 BC on a peninsula extending out into the sea and was later developed by the Ionians, who were one of four major Greek tribes of that era. A still later settlement was established nearby by the Romans on the slopes of Mount Pagos.

In New-Testament times Smyrna was a very beautiful port city at the head of the Hermus River with a well-sheltered harbor. It was known as the "crown city" because it had many beautiful public buildings that ringed the summit of Mount Pagos like a crown. The Acropolis, a fortified citadel located on Mount Pagos, was encircled with flowers, hedges, and myrtle trees further adding to this description. In addition, Smyrna was the terminus for an important overland trade route from the east.

The word "smyrna" means "myrrh," a fragrant gum resin obtained from the Commiphora-myrrha tree that was produced and marketed by the residents of this city. Myrrh was a very costly substance used by the Egyptians as well as wealthy Jews in embalming their dead. It was effective in both preserving the body and in preventing the foul odor associated with decaying flesh.[445]

The city of Smyrna was deeply infused with pagan worship – even more so than was Ephesus. The city housed a temple of Zeus, the Greek

[444]The church at Smyrna was a suffering church that was constantly facing death from the agents of Satan. Jesus had found no fault with them; promising them that if they would remain faithful unto death, He would give them the crown of eternal life (cf. Re.2:8-11; Commentary page 142).

[445]This costly substance along with gold and frankincense were presented to Jesus by the Magi that had come from the oriental east to worship Him (cf. Mt. 2:1,2,11).

god of the sky and of thunder (known by the Romans as Jupiter), and a temple of Cybele (also worshiped as Diana, the moon goddess, in Ephesus). Cybele was the supposed mother-goddess of all other gods and of men, and she was also viewed as the goddess of primal nature.

The city also contained a temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty, and a temple of Apollo, the Greek god of the sun and of war. Lastly it contained a temple of Aesculapius (aka Asklepios or Asclepius),[446] the Greek god of medicine – Smyrna was famous in the ancient world for its supposed great knowledge of medicine.

We know from Revelation 2:9 that there was also a great company of those in Smyrna who "say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." Having found their way there, following the destruction of Jerusalem, those Jews had become totally corrupted by their satanic surroundings. Not only had they rejected their Messiah, they were determined to eradicate all Christians, who had accepted him as Christ and Lord, by reporting them to Roman authorities as being disloyal to Caesar and thus deserving of punishment and death.

This later Roman settlement was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 200; both the earlier and later locations of Smyrna are archaeological ruins today. Both sites are located within the city boundaries of *Izmir*, a city within the modern-day nation of Turkey.

The Ancient City of Pergamos

Pergamos[447] (aka Pergamon, Pergamum) had existed as an ancient settlement prior to 400 BC. In biblical times, it was a city of Mysia lo-

[446]We shall find that the worship of Aesculapius was even more prominent in the city of Pergamos.

[447]Jesus said that Satan had firmly established his seat in this city (cf. Re. 2:13), likely referring to serpent worship. The church founded here had held fast to Jesus and had not denied his name, and some had suffered martyrdom for their faith; but they had also given in to the teaching of Balaam to worship idols, had eaten of the polluted meat that had been offered to them, and had engaged in fornication. Moreover they had given themselves over to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans that Jesus hated (cf. Re. 2:12-17; Commentary page 146).

cated on a promontory near the River Selinus (or *Ciacus*) – about 18 miles inland from the Aegean Sea and around 50 miles north-east of Smyrna. It was both a very beautiful and very wealthy city, which produced a much sought after parchment known by the Greeks as *Pergamene* – so named after the city. Pergamos also boasted of a great library which contained over two hundred thousand volumes of scrolls.[448]

Pergamos grew in prominence under Roman rule, its population expanding to as many as 200,000 residents. For a time, it was designated as the Roman capital of Asia until that capital was later moved to Ephesus.

Pergamum was a center for ancient Babylonian Sol (sun god) worship, and it also had an altar to the Greek god Zeus as well as several temples dedicated to Roman emperor-worship.

A sanctuary was constructed in a valley at Pergamum, which was dedicated to Aesculapius, (aka Asklepios or Asclepius**)** the Greek God of medicine and healing – much as it had developed in the city of Smyrna. An occult-science developed around Aesculapius in Pergamos, in which satanic healing purportedly took place through the symbol of a serpent. Those who were stricken of infirmities would bathe in a spring located there, during which Aesculapius would allegedly appear to them in a dream with a remedy for their medical condition. At its peak, the sanctuary grounds were overrun with thousands of mostly non-poisonous snakes. This sanctuary was later expanded into a lavish Roman spa, wherein it retained its earlier notoriety as a therapeutic healing center.

The insignia of Aesculapius was a staff entwined with a serpent. This symbol is often confused with the caduceus, which is the rod of Hermes, the Greek god of cunning and theft, having two serpents entwining around it. Inasmuch as the caduceus is also associated with Mercury, the Greek god of speed, wings are often added to this symbol. Variations of those two symbols have over time become nearly inter-

[448]Mark Anthony later gave this collection to Cleopatra who had the volumes carried off to Alexandria in Egypt to be placed in the much-revered library located there.

changeable as emblems associated with the modern-day medical profession.[449]

The city of Pergamos was severely damaged by an earthquake in AD 262, and it was thoroughly pillaged by the Goths shortly thereafter. Today, the city is but another ruin located just northwest of the modern city of *Bergama*, which is within the *Izmir* province of Turkey.

The Ancient City of Thyatira

The city of Thyatira[450] was located about 50 miles from the Aegean Sea, and about 45 miles east of Pergamos. In 290 BC, it was a Greek city known by the name of *Pelopia*. It was later renamed Thyatira by king Seleucus Nicator in honor of his newborn daughter (in Greek, "*thyatira*" means "daughter"). It was not a very great city, being the smallest of the seven cities we are studying, but it was located along an important inland trade route and was deeply engaged in commerce.

The city came under Roman rule about 133 BC. In Roman times, the city was well fortified, disregarding the fact that it was located in an open valley, inasmuch as an elite contingent of the Roman guard was stationed there.

Thyatira was noted for its network of many worker guilds or labor unions, which were engaged in producing various quality products including wool and linen goods and apparel, as well as pottery, bronzework, tanned hides, and leather goods. Pergamos was quite famous for its weaving industry and for the dying of cloth. The dye that was known as "turkey red" was obtained from the madder root, and it was particularly popular in making robes for the aristocrat and the wealthy.

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[449]Another somewhat less objectionable origin of this modern medical emblem is suggested from the text of Numbers 21:6-9.

[450]This city housed the church that was faithful on works of charity and service; but they had also suffered "Jezebel," a woman who called herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce many of their number to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols (cf. Re. 2:18-29; Commentary page 151).

This dye although exceedingly red was distributed by Lydia who was referred to as a "seller of purple" (cf. Ac. 16:14).[451] The Apostle Paul met Lydia in Philippi while on his second missionary journey, and she was miraculously converted to the Christian faith.

The primary deity of Pergamos was Tyrimnos who was worshiped as the sun god. However, the worship of Apollo (the god of prophecy, music, medicine, and poetry who was as well alternately worshiped as the god of the sun), and Artemis (the moon goddess sister of Apollo – variously referred to as Diana) was also worshiped. In addition, each of the many worker guilds had their own patron god or goddess, who was worshiped through various local festivals and feasts, frequently attended by drunken revelries.[452]

It is not known how the Gospel of Jesus Christ first reached Thyatira; it could have come about through the evangelical efforts of believers sent from Ephesus (cf. Ac. 19:10), or perhaps Lydia and her associates carried it there soon after her conversion. Moreover it is not impossible that Paul and Silas could have briefly passed through Thyatira with the Gospel message on Paul's second or third missionary journey, but there is no firm Scriptural evidence to support that supposition.

Today, the ruins of the ancient city of Thyatira are located at the city of *Akhisar*, which is located south of *Istanbul* in the modern nation of Turkey.

[451]The true purple dye was slowly and with great effort extracted from sea snails found within the Mediterranean sea. This laborious process made the purple dye even more valuable than gold.

[452]We note that there is no indication of any large Jewish population within Pergamos.

The Ancient City of Sardis

Sardis[453] was an inland city located about thirty miles south of Thyatira and sixty miles northeast of Smyrna. The city was located on the northern slope of Mount Tmolus, overlooking the fertile plain of Hermus along the Pactolus River. It was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia and later became the seat of a Roman proconsul exercising the authority of the Roman Empire in the region.

It also became a notable commercial city commanding an important trade route to and from the Aegean Sea into the interior of the Asian Continent. It was quite famous for its many skilled artisans and craftsmen. The art of dyeing wool is believed to have been invented there, and it was the first city known to have mass-produced coins to be used as currency. The city contained a mint that produced high quality coins made of gold and silver. Silver was mined nearby, and gold was obtained in some abundance from the Pactolus River.

Much like other cities about them, Sardis contained a temple to Apollo, but it was most notable for its temple of Artemis (or Cynthia – closely associated with Cybele and Diana), who was the primary goddess of the city. The temple's construction had begun in 334 BC; but due to its considerable size and complexity, it was never fully completed. Nevertheless, this Greek temple was one of the seven largest ever conceived – being twice the size of the Parthenon, a temple built in Athens, Greece. The city of Sardis was also noted for its nearby necropolis, a large cemetery that contained a sizable number of burial sites. Today, this necropolis is referred to as *Bin Tepe* or "Thousand Mounds," because of the great number of earthen mounds in which the city's kings and nobles had been entombed along with much of their wealth.

An acropolis with very steep walls was located on a 950 foot high crag of Mount Tmolus, which allowed it to serve as a bastion in time

[453]The church located at Sardis boasted of the great name they had made for themselves, yet Jesus referred to it as a dead church. What few truths they still held were about to die. There were very few of their number that had not defiled themselves with evil works through repentance. Only they would find their names written down in the book of life, while the others would have their names blotted out (cf. Re. 3:1-6; Commentary page 159).

of attack or siege by an enemy. On the north side of the citadel, overlooking the valley of Hermus, was a theater of nearly 400 feet in diameter, which was in turn attached to a stadium capable of seating around 1000.

Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 17, but it was rebuilt with a large amount of monetary aid provided by the Roman Emperor Tiberius. Finally, in the year AD 616, the city of Sardis' came to an abrupt end when a powerful Persian army, having penetrated Roman defenses, sacked the city leaving it totally devastated. So severe was this destruction that no serious effort was ever made to restore the city. Sardis' ancient ruins, known today as *Sert-Kalessi*, are located near the present-day Turkish village of *Sart*.

The Ancient City of Philadelphia

The city of Philadelphia[454] was founded by Attalus II Philadelphus (159-138 BC). The city got its name as a consequence of Attalus' love for his brother Eumenes, the king of Pergamum. The name Philadelphia, meaning "the city of brotherly love," was given to the city by Attalus out of loyalty to his brother. In its early days, it served as a Greek outpost in greater Anatolia.

The city was built in a deep valley surrounded by four hills on the Cogamos River, a tributary of the Hermus River, where it later served as a fortress to protect the greater cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum, from inland invasions. Philadelphia rested upon a serious geological fault in which there was considerable seismic activity. So much so that in AD 17, the city had been reduced to ruins – as was also Sardis. The Roman Emperor Tiberius authorized a considerable sum of money to restore the city. In gratitude, the city was renamed Neocaesarea (i.e. New Caesarea).

Although later overrun by many Muslim invasions, Philadelphia maintained its Christian witness throughout medieval and well into

[454]The church located at Philadelphia was the faithful evangelical church before which Christ had set an open door of Gospel witness that none could shut (cf. Re.3:7-13; Commentary page 164).

modern times. Today, what remains of the city of Philadelphia is a flourishing Turkish town known as *Alaşehir*.

The Ancient City of Laodicea

This ancient city of Laodicea[455] was originally called Diospolis or "City of Zeus" and was afterwards referred to as Rhodas. Still later around 260 BC, the city of Laodicea was founded on this same site by Antiochus II; the city of Laodicea was named for his beloved wife, Laodice. Laodicea was located on the Lycus River about 45 miles south-east of Philadelphia and because it was also situated on a much-traveled Asian trade route, its residents soon became quite wealthy. Great camel caravans came out of the east through the "Gate of Phrygia" and then through Laodicea on their way westward to Ephesus and Miletus on the coast of the Aegean Sea. In 133 BC, Laodicea came under Roman domination and rule, during which time it also became a great center of industry. Along with its prosperity, a large banking system also developed.

Located within the city of Laodicea was an Anatolian temple to the Phrygian god, *Men Karou*. Like Pergamum, Laodicea had a highly acclaimed pagan medical school. A much sought after salve for the eyes was developed there, which was made from clay taken from the hills about the city to which spikenard was added. Although the salve actually had little or no genuine medicinal value, it was widely sold throughout the Roman Empire.

A large number of Laodicea's inhabitants were Jews, which had been transported into the region of Phrygia out of Babylonia. While there is no direct record in Scripture of the Apostle Paul ever visiting Laodicea, he may have passed through there on his third journey while en-route to Ephesus. We do know that he wrote an epistle to the Laodicean church that is no longer extant (cf. Col. 4:16), and that he

[455] The church located at Laodicea was a dreadful lukewarm church who supposes itself to be rich because of its many possessions, but was actually impoverished of the things of God. It was "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They had in fact locked Christ out of their church assembly (cf. 3:14-22; Commentary page 168).

was greatly concerned for the church's spiritual well being (cf. Col. 2:1).

The entire area of the sub-Asian continent suffered from frequent earthquakes as we have noted in our previous discussions of the six other cities. A great earthquake occurred during the reign of the demented emperor Nero in AD 60 in which the town was completely destroyed. The prideful inhabitants of the city declined Rome's aid to rebuild the city, choosing instead to restore it out of their own rather extensive wealth.

The ruins of what was once Laodicea are now located near the modern Turkish city of *Denizli*. The site has been well preserved and has been considerably renovated. Many streets once crisscrossed over the city, which were flanked by colonnades and numerous pedestals. Its many buildings included a stadium built on two opposing hillsides, bath houses fed through an aqueduct originating at a spring some distance away, a gymnasium, several pagan temples, various indoor theaters, and a building where a local Roman senate had once regularly met. On the eastern side of the city, the outline of an ancient wall is in evidence, along with the remains of a gate opening toward the road to Ephesus. On the north side is a cemetery containing the stone sarcophagus graves of its past affluent residents, which had long ago been opened and pillaged of their valuables. ■

Covenantalism

Over the many decades before, during, and following the *Protestant Reformation Movement*, Bible scholars had sought to organize Scripture by dividing it into formal intervals of time based upon what God had required of mankind and/or how He judged mankind during those periods. The earliest group of scholars had adopted a system of interpretation known as Covenantalism, which is based upon the declared covenants found recorded within Scripture; while others much later adopted an interpretative system known as Dispensationalism, which is based upon how God interacted with mankind following and between each of those declared covenants.

Although a systematic study of the Scriptures can be quite useful, we must always allow the biblical text to speak for itself, and not attempt to bend it to fit into the rigid mold of an external interpretative system. Both of these systems have their strong points as well as their weaknesses, inasmuch as they both are to some extent an external system of organization being applied to the Bible. In this Article, we shall limit our discussion to Covenantalism, while providing a similar critique of Dispensationalism in a separate Article found on page 460.

A covenant in the Biblical sense is seen as an irrevocable agreement or promise made by God with mankind. A newer covenant does not necessarily replace or displace an older one, but it often enhances and builds upon earlier ones. In that sense, Covenantalists view all of the covenants earlier entered into by God with mankind from Adam onward as being applicable to men of every age – up to and including the current Christian era. Therefore, they view all of Scripture as one vast period of time, beginning with Adam, then progressing forward through various specific covenants that God made with men in the Old Testament and concluding with the New Covenant established by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Formal Covenants of Covenantalism

The Covenantalist analysis of Scripture is mostly based upon direct proclamations of God found within formal covenants recorded in Scripture – and this is Covenantalism's strongest attribute. Those generally accepted covenants are as follows:

- **Covenant of Redemption**[456] Ge. 1:26,27 – a covenant internal to the triune Godhead providing for the redemption of mankind through the election of a redeemed race chosen by God before the foundation of the earth.
- **Adamic Covenant** Ge.2:16,17 – a covenant God made with Adam that was strictly based upon man's obedient behavior in which disobedience was punishable by death.
- **Noachian Covenant** Ge.8:20-9:17 – A reaffirmation through Noah of a continuation of the created order of the universe within which the earth would never again be destroyed by water – symbolized by a rainbow. The beginnings of human government.
- **Abrahamic Covenant** Ge.12:7; 17:9,10; Lu.1:72,73 – Abram was called out of Ur of the Chaldees by God and promised a land, a people, and a seed. This covenant was symbolized by the ritual practice of circumcision.
- **Mosaic Covenant** Ex.19-24 – Israel, led out of Egyptian bondage by Moses, established as God's chosen people. Seen

[456] There is no specific Scripture wherein this covenant of redemption is recorded; it is merely assumed. Moreover, this supposed covenant was not made between God and man, but within the Godhead. For that reason, not all Covenantalists accept this as one of the covenants belonging in this list.

as an expansion of the Abrahamic covenant. The institution of national law established within Ten Commandments. The Ceremonial Law was also established, which pointed to the necessity of redemption to be received through the death of a mediator.

- **Moabite Covenant**[457] De.29:1-12 – The covenant with Moab is viewed as God's beforehand embrace of uncircumcised Gentiles by grace through faith. (cf. Ro.10:6-8).
- **Levitical Covenant**[458] Ne.13:29; Mal.2:8 – a priestly covenant seen as a subset of the Mosaic covenant, which is detailed within the book of Leviticus.
- **Davidic Covenant** 2Sa.7:16 – a covenant God made with King David in which He would build him a house and a lineage, through which his throne would be established forever through a coming Messiah.
- **New Covenant** Je.31:31; He.8:8-10 –The long anticipated Messiah arrives and established a New Covenant in his own blood (cf. Lu.22:20) This New Covenant is presented and verified in the books of the New Testament and is commonly symbolized by the ritual of water baptism.

[457] Since the Moabite and Levitical covenants are essentially subsets of the Mosaic covenant, some Covenantalists view them as being one and the same and/or discount them both as being superfluous to this major list of covenants.

[458] Ibid.

Major Interpretative Methods

There are two major interpretative methods of Scripture utilized by two separate groups of Covenantalists. The most prevalent is an Historist Interpretation, and the second is a Spiritual-Idealist Interpretation, both of which we shall discuss below. Nevertheless, both groups generally agree on two primary premises at the outset. Those two premises are generally referred to as an "analogy of faith" and a "replacement theology:"

Analogy of Faith

Covenantalists generally propose and accept an allegorical interpretation of Scriptural text in accordance with what they refer to as an overall "analogy of faith" – essentially believing that all Scripture must be strictly interpreted in the light of all other Scripture. While this approach seems reasonable on the surface, the allegorical approach often leads them to reject the plain meaning of Scripture text in its clear local context, in favor of allegorizing its meaning to comply with systemic Covenantalism.

As one major example, "Israel" when it is found in the Old-Testament Scriptures is commonly understood by Covenantalists as an "allegorical Israel" – unless an objective Jewish national context is overwhelmingly specific. That presumption leads directly into the next premise commonly referred to as "replacement theology."

Replacement Theology

Israel is viewed by Covenantalists as the Church in embryo, which later grew into full maturity in Christ through the New-Covenant Church consisting entirely of Gentiles. This leads the Covenantalist to accept a "replacement theology" in which all of the blessings God had earlier promised to Israel, as the "old covenant assembly," have now been transferred over to the "new-covenant assembly," namely the Church. When this supposed transfer was completed with the destruc-

tion of the Temple and of Israel as a nation in AD 70, Israel as a unique Jewish entity was seen to be relegated to the trash-heap of history. Accordingly, it is supposed that God has cast them aside and erased them out of his memory forever.[459]

The Historist Interpretation

Having discussed those two primary premises, we find that most Covenantalists hold to a general interpretation of Scripture that is referred to as the "historist view," wherein everything recorded within Scripture is viewed as history. Prophecies contained within that history are viewed as having been fulfilled in the past. Accordingly, the historist states that the events contained within the Revelation are not future-prophetic, but have in fact been fulfilled within all or various periods of human history. A typical application is to ascribe prophetic text to various events that took place during the Maccabean era,[460] prior to the incarnation of Christ. In this view, the Antichrist is assumed to have been Antiochus IV Epiphanies, the mad ruler of the Seleucid Empire that occupied Palestine between the years 175 to 164 BC.

As still another example of the historist view, a monk, in AD 1202, arbitrarily assigned a day-year principle to the 1260 days of Revelation 11:3, such that the last 3 ½ years of Daniel's seventieth week was applied to a period beginning with the Apostles and ending in his own time. Still other historists have similarly tried to make the events of the Revelation fit into more contemporary time-frames.

It must be noted, however, that it becomes necessary to stretch both historical fact and Scriptural text to make all the puzzle pieces fit convincingly into any one of these historist schemes. That fact accounts for

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[459]This assumption has led to the growth of a prejudicial antisemitism embedded within nearly all Covenantal churches in which Jews are irrationally hated and detested as being something less than human.

[460]The Maccabees, a traditionalist sect of Judaism, had organized a successful revolt against Hellenist Jews who ruled Jerusalem at that time.

a rather large number of interpretations that are based upon the historist view.[461]

Preterism

Preterism constitutes a specific form of the historist view, commonly found in today's denominational Presbyterianism. "Preterism" is derived from the Latin word *praeter*, which denotes something that is past or on the "far side" of the present day. Hence, the preterist is a historist who believes that all the events of judgment recorded in the Revelation have already been fulfilled during the Roman and Apostolic era. They commonly view the second coming of Jesus Christ as having taken place in AD 70 at the time of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Roman armies.

The Olivet discourse[462] is considered to be prophetic regarding future events recorded within the Revelation, but according to the Preterist it narrowly refers to the first-century destruction of Jerusalem. Accordingly, the great tribulation period, of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24:21, is viewed as the severe persecution of Christians that took place during the first century. This persecution included the decapitation of the Apostle Paul, which took place under the emperor Nero, whom many preterists envision as having been the Antichrist.

The Textual Basis for the Preterist View

The Preterist sites various Scriptural texts in support of their view, which we shall now briefly examine in an effort to determine their veracity with respect to an earlier return of Jesus Christ within our past.

The first text is found in the very first verse of the Revelation, which reads in part: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things **which must shortly come to**

[461]It is difficult for one to believe that John's highly detailed account was merely intended to be a recapitulation of the past; especially so in the light of Revelation 1:19, wherein John was explicitly told to write about things that were yet to occur in his far future and presumably within or beyond our own lifetimes as well.

[462]cf. Article, Jesus' Olivet Discourse, page 537.

pass..." (Re.1:1; emphasis added). The argument made by the Preterist is that the nineteen plus centuries since his Ascension could hardly be considered a "short time."[463]

A second text is found in Matthew 24:36 that states, "But of that day and hour knoweth no *man,* no, not the angels of Heaven, but my Father only." Preterists argue that Jesus did not mention the year since his return would occur within the lifetimes of the immediate generation of his disciples. That assumption is seen to be further supported by interpreting two other verses in a similar manner: "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Mt 16:28). And, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Mt.24:34).

A third text often used to support the Preterist position is found in Matthew 10:23 wherein Jesus said to his disciples as He sent them out, "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, **Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come"** (emphasis added).

Textual Difficulties with the Preterist View

We must realize, however, that there are many serious problems with the Preterist interpretation – primarily that of context – that we must now discuss. First of all, we observe that Jesus' return in AD 70 could only have been a "spiritual return" (as they themselves claim) not a bodily one. This notion of a spiritual return is in direct conflict with Acts 1:11, wherein it is said that Jesus will return in "like manner" as he had ascended. Jesus ascended in the flesh, whereas in the Preterist view He ascended only in spirit, thus also implying that Jesus resurrection was not a bodily resurrection.

As to the emperor Nero being the Antichrist, his reign and persecution was limited to the Roman Empire, more specifically a broad region

[463]It should also be noted that the preterist also assumes that the Revelation document was written in or about AD 68 – just before Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 (cf. Date of the Document on page 93 of the Commentary).

around Rome, not the entire earth. He issued no mark restricting the trade of goods (cf. Re.13:16,17). As to his personal character, he was a weak, and ineffectual man[464] who took his own life in AD 68 two years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. Hence, Nero was not even typical of the Antichrist that is referred to within the book of the Revelation.

As terrible as the siege and destruction of Jerusalem had been, it has not been the worse period of tribulation in the history of the earth, as Jesus emphatically stated that the future tribulation period would be (cf. Mt.24:21). Arguably, the massive suffering of great populations during World War II that ended in the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan was exceedingly more devastating than was the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

As to the specific texts mentioned above, let us begin by examining Revelation 1:1. "Shortly" in this verse is *tachos* in the Greek. Its primary meaning is "a brief period of time." It can be translated as "quickly," "speedily," or "shortly" as we find it used here. It does not specify when this short period of time will begin. It could begin immediately or thousands of years into the future, but when it does begin, events within it must rapidly occur to fit within that brief period.

Regarding verse 10:23 in the gospel of Matthew: in the immediate context of this verse Jesus was merely telling his disciples that He would be rejoining them before they had gone over all of the cities of Israel. Obviously, all of the cities of Israel had been visited by the disciples long before Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70; in fact, the Gospel had spread outward into Samaria, and it was even carried toward the ends of the earth, as the Apostle Paul reached the far-flung Gentile populations throughout the Roman Empire with the Gospel (cf. Ac.1:7,8).

As to the "day and hour" found in Matthew 24:36, Jesus was merely telling them that the precise time of his return to the earth could not be known by any man. Although there will be many strong indications that that day is approaching, any knowledge of the exact day and hour will not be possible – even when Jesus' return is immediately pending. This time is not known by the angels in Heaven or even by Christ Himself.

[464]There is considerable evidence indicating that Nero was also a practicing homosexual.

Only the Father knows of that precise day and hour that He has preordained according to his divine will.

As to the generation Jesus spoke of in Matthew 16:28, He was obviously referring to the revelation that Peter, James and John saw when He was transfigured on the mountain top, and they saw Him as the Eternal King (cf. Mt.17:1,2). Ignoring the unfortunate placement of the Chapter break inserted here, we note that verse 1 of Chapter 17 immediately follows verse 18 of Chapter 16.

In Matthew 24 verse 34, Jesus was not referring to the lifespan of his immediate disciples; but in the context of this passage, He was speaking of those who would begin to see the predictive signs of which He had just spoken being fulfilled in rapid succession.

Partial-Preterism

Because Preterism effectively denies the "blessed hope" of Jesus' future return to the earth for his Elect (cf. Tit.2:13), some historists only partially accept that position. In this modified view, Jesus' return in AD 70 is considered to have been but a spiritual return that was a prophetic precursor to his second advent that is yet future.

Partial preterists commonly believe in a second advent of Christ and a general resurrection and judgment of all men at the end of days. Similar to full Preterist, however, they do not believe that Jesus will call down to earth to transport his Church out of harm's way in the Rapture, as the Apostle Paul had revealed in 1Th.4:13-18. They also do not believe in the coming of a literal Antichrist in the last days, whom the Lord Jesus will ultimately destroy at his coming (cf. 2Th.2:2-9; 1Jn.2:18). Nor do they believe in the establishment of a future Kingdom Age on earth – or the redemption of Israel in the last days.[465]

The Spiritual-Idealist Interpretation

This brings us to a discussion of the more radical "spiritualist view," also referred to as the "idealist view," which states that the events

[465]cf. Covenantalist Eschatology, below on page 456.

recorded in the Revelation have no literal context at all, but merely point out the significance of various idealistic Christian principles and attitudes. The severe judgments clearly stated in the Revelation are only seen to serve as warnings of serious consequences for Christians who deviate from the faith, while other texts near the end of the document are to serve as encouragement for those that conform. This view obviously necessitates radically allegorizing the text of the Revelation.[466]

This is generally the view of most Covenantalists as well as the view of religious scholars in many liberal main-line denominations who render the entire book of the Revelation as poetic allegory rather than predictive prophecy. This view is also held by many Preterists who consider the text of the Revelation as having been fulfilled in the past.[467]

Covenantalist Eschatology

We note that the list of formal covenants on page 448 excludes any mention of any specific covenant regarding a Millennial Age. This is in accord with the Covenants' strict acceptance of a Replacement Theology[468] in which it is asserted that the Church has fully replaced Israel. Hence, Covenantalists can find no logical basis for a Kingdom Age on earth following the Church age.

Covenantalists are divided into two different camps regarding their common denial of a future Millennial Age on earth. The first denies that a millennial age exists at all, while the second asserts that the "millennium" is but a metaphor for the present church age. The first denial is referred to as Amillennialsm and the second is referred to as

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[466]It must be noted that radically allegorizing the prophecies in the book of the Revelation out of their prophetic context could be used to justify almost any sort of religious bent, no matter how extreme it may be.

[467]It should be noted that the Spiritual-Idealist view is often combined with the Historist view by Preterists and other Historists when the text cannot be bent to conform to a prescribed historical context.

[468]cf. Replacement Theology, above on page 450.

Post-Millinnialism. Of the two, Amillenialism (i.e. "no millennium") is the most prevalent view held by Covenantalists within this present age.

Amillennialism

Amillennialists argue that there will be no thousand-year reign of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. They envision Christ returning to earth one day in judgment, thus ending all future activity on earth as the eternal ages immediately begin. In doing so, however, they must somehow account for the "thousand years" that are clearly mentioned six times in Revelation Chapter 20. The Amillennialist interpretation discounts the "thousand years" stated in Revelation as being but a metaphorical term that only designates a very long length of time.

They often put forth the verse found in the Old Testament wherein it is stated that the LORD owns the cattle on a thousand hills (cf. Ps.50:10) in defense of this assumption. Arguably, there are far more than a thousand hills upon the earth with cattle on them. The logical question then arises, "who owns the cattle on all the other hills?" However, the verse of this Psalm of praise fits into the context of hyperbole often utilized within poetry – all very legitimately. That poetic context is totally absent within the book of the Revelation wherein John is speaking of literal prophetic events.

Many Amillennialists also argue that the "thousand years" is only mentioned in a "few obscure verses" in Chapter 20 of an otherwise enigmatic book of the Revelation that was not intended to be taken literally, but only spiritually. However, we find that a thousand years is boldly mentioned six times in just six verses in that chapter so that we cannot so easily discount its significance (cf. Re.20:2–7). If we accept the text of Chapter 20 within its chronological context, we discover that the reason the thousand years is only mentioned here is that the Millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ comes about following the end of the final outpouring of God's wrath upon the earth at the conclusion of the great and terrible Day of the Lord.[469]

[469]cf. The Great Day of the Lord is Come, Commentary page 209; Illustration 3, page 203.

Post-Millennialism

Some early Covenantalists believed that the Church would ultimately convert the earth for Christ, and that He would then return in the end-times to claim it and rule as its divine king. This Post-millennial position is based upon the belief that the preaching of the Gospel by great men of the church will eventually convert all of mankind and thus usher in a fully "Christian" age, at the culmination of which Christ will return to lay claim to his completed kingdom. This concept is still prevalent within Roman Catholicism and many other churches of the Reformed Faith who still hold a similarly "high view" of the temporal church.

Post-millennialists consider the "thousand years," mentioned in the Revelation as a metaphoric length of time in which Jesus has been ruling upon earth through the hierarchy of his Church. That metaphoric view of a millennium is quite necessary inasmuch as nearly two thousand years have already transpired since Jesus' ascension, and He has not yet returned to take over the reigns of his Church.

Nevertheless, many Post-millennialists have now come to the realization that the church on earth will not be able to convert the entire world, inasmuch as the total and obstinate depravity of man has been so obviously revealed in two world wars and more recently in semi-organized terrorism and other lesser forms of wild radicalism. They have most often been forced to digress to the extent that they now accept the Amillennial mindset. Even so, many today have a very high view of the temporal church to the extent that they are blinded to the realities of world conditions. With the influence of humanism that is so widespread today, many still cling to a post-millennial viewpoint in practice if not in doctrine – especially so when world affairs seem to be on the mend for a time.

Soteriology – the Doctrine of Salvation

Covenantalists are almost universally Calvinists. Calvinism is a Protestant theological system formulated by John Calvin and his successors, which develops Martin Luther's doctrine of justification by

faith alone and emphasizes the grace of God through divine election of the saved within the doctrine of predestination. Calvinists have formulated five points that summarize their view which are: 1) Total Depravity, 2) Unconditional Election, 3) Limited Atonement, 4) Irresistible Grace, and 5) Perseverance of the Saints. This doctrine as well as the five points are discussed in detail within *CRC* Book I, *Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith* Section 3, *Sovereignty of God and the Salvation of Man*.

Dispensationalism

About the year AD 1830, John Nelson Darby, an influential Anglican-Irish Bible teacher among the original Plymouth Brethren and the founder of a subgroup known as the Exclusive Brethren, formulated an innovative system of Bible interpretation as an alternative to the well-established but problematic Covenantalism of his day. His systematic theology soon became known as Dispensationalism.

Dispensation Defined

When Adam sinned, he was immediately subjected to death; yet Adam lived on earth for 930 years (cf. Ge.5:5). This period in which Adam lived constituted an exemption for a time from God's hard and fast precept that emphatically states that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ez.18:20). Adam's period of exemption provides a basis for our understanding of a dispensation. In a biblical sense, a dispensation can be defined as the ordering of events exercised under the divine authority of God through a system of principles, promises, disciplines, laws, and judgments; thus providing man an exemption from the impending penalty of death for a specific length of time.

The word "dispensation" is found four times in the New Testament (cf. 1Co. 9:17; Ep.1:10; 3:2; Col. 1:25). In each instance, it is translated from the Greek word *oikonomia,* which can be defined as "an economy," "an administration," or "a stewardship." An economy is a systematic way of doing things, and an administration defines the means by which things are run and controlled within that economy.

Generally speaking, a dispensation occupies the specific period of time immediately following God's declaration of a formal covenant with man. In that sense, a dispensation describes how God administers that covenant – until and unless a newer covenant is established by Him to modify or replace it. Stewardship describes man's responsibility to uphold and fully conform to God's covenant within each dispen-

sation of time in which God has revealed a specific aspect of his will and has spelled out man's required obedience to that revelation.

In every instance man's fallen nature has prevented his full compliance. Thus, God has repeatedly found it necessary to judge men for their failure to fully conform to His will within each dispensation, while providing them additional light and opportunity through the establishment of an additional covenant and a further dispensation – until in the fullness of time the New Covenant founded in the blood of Christ was established, thus also establishing a unique dispensation based upon the Gospel of grace, which is now nearly two thousand years long:

> **"[16]For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! [17]For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation *of the gospel* is committed unto me"** (1Co. 9:16, 17 emphasis added).

The Apostle Paul saw the Gospel as a dispensation of the New covenant that had been committed to him, through which an unconditional obligation had been placed upon him to willingly administer and dispense the good news of Christ abroad throughout his lifetime.

The Seven Dispensations

Dispensationalists have divided Scripture into seven different segments of time or dispensations (as listed below) based upon how God has interacted with man during that specific period. As each dispensation ends, the revelation of previous dispensations are not seen as having been cast away, but accumulate as a body of revealed truth within the conscience of man (cf. Ep.1:10). For instance, although the Christian who is led by the Holy Spirit is no longer under Law (cf. Ga.5:18), the moral imperative revealed in the prior dispensation of

Law remains intact, but it is now being administered differently through grace within this present dispensation.[470]

In each dispensation, man's failure to perfectly comply with the requirements of God's revelation is certain because of his fallen nature. Therefore, man's strict obedience within a dispensation is not seen as a precondition to salvation, for salvation is based solely upon God's grace through faith in the atoning death of Christ in every age beginning with Adam.[471]

Dispensationalists generally agree on seven specific dispensations, which are listed below. As a point of reference, we have also included the covenants that begin and end each of those dispensations in italics.

The Edenic Covenant

- **Dispensation of Innocence** Ge.1:28-3:24 – Adam and Eve lived within Eden in a state of innocent sinless perfection. However, their life and stay was forfeited when they partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God had prohibited them from eating. As a consequence, they were put out of the Garden.

The Adamic Covenant

- **Dispensation of Conscience** Ge.3:24-8:19 – Encompassing the period following Adam's fall during which each man was ruled by his own conscience. Man's failure to comply with God's mandates through his evil thoughts and

[470]It is not uncommon for the Old Testament to be referred to as the dispensation of law, whereas the New Testament is referred to as the dispensation of grace. Nevertheless, divine grace can be found within the Old Testament, and divine law can also be found within the New Testament. Therefore, this division is not absolute.

[471] For more information regarding the dispensational view, see page 3 of *The New Scofield Reference Bible* ,C.I. Scofield, DD., Oxford University Press, Inc. 1967.

actions ultimately led to man's mass destruction in a great global flood – leaving but eight souls to continue the human race.

The Noachian Covenant

- **Dispensation of Human Government** Ge.8:20-12:1 – In the aftermath of the Noachian flood, man was placed under subordinate human rule to maintain order and to protect human life through the ultimate institution of the death penalty.

The Abrahamic Covenant

- **Dispensation of Promise** Ge.12:1-Ex.20:1 – Abraham called to form a unique nation out of his chosen descendants based upon the express promises of God.

The Mosaic Covenant

- **Dispensation of Law** Ex.20:1-Ac.2:1 – Israel formed as a national theocracy – under the direct law of God through the giving of the Ten Commandments, social regulations, and ceremonial laws.

The New Covenant

- **Dispensation of Grace** Ac.2:1-Re.20:4 – An age instituted by Jesus Christ in which God's free grace is paramount; wherein any who accept by faith the atoning death of Christ on the cross for his sin can be reconciled to God and declared righteous before Him.

The Mosaic Covenant Reinstated

- **Dispensation of the Kingdom** Re.20:4-21:1 – a future thousand-year Kingdom Age on Earth with Jesus Christ reigning upon the throne of David as was predicted in De.30:3; Sa.7:16. It ends as the Eternal Ages begin.

We should observe that no formal statement is made concerning any dispensation that would correspond in any way to the Covenantalist's so-called “Covenant of Redemption,” (cf. Page 448), inasmuch as no such covenant was made between God and man. Rather it is but a supposed covenant that had been made within the Godhead. However, it is clear that God in absolute unity through predestination chose his own before the foundation of the earth, rendering such a "covenant" within the Godhead superfluous. Moreover, referring to this internal agreement as a "covenant" would suggest the possibility of disunity within the Godhead, which leans toward the heretical error of Tritheism (i.e. three separate Gods). For that reason, even some Covenantalists do not consider this to be a valid covenant, as was noted earlier in our Article on Covenentalism on page 448.

In addition, we find that a future dispensation, located within a Millennial Kingdom age,[472] is listed as the very last dispensation. The Covenantalist essentially ignores this Kingdom Age inasmuch as they say that they can find no corresponding formal covenant establishing it.[473] Other than those two exceptions, the dispensations can be seen to chronologically correspond to the periods of time existing between the formal Covenants that are recognized by the Covenantalist.

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[472] We shall discuss dispensational Millennialism later on page 468.

[473]The Kingdom Covenant was declared in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt. 5:1-48).

Conditional and Unconditional Covenants

Dispensationalists take note that some of the covenants that God made with man were based upon their strict adherence to the terms of the covenant while others were not. The covenant God made with Adam was conditional upon his obedience in abstaining from the partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Likewise, the Mosaic covenant was conditional upon Israel strictly obeying the law of God that was given in the Decalogue.

Other covenants such as the Abrahamic covenant and the Davidic covenant were unconditional.[474] Even in the case of conditional covenants, there were often certain elements of the covenant that were based upon God's specific promise such that His purposes were never thwarted by the failures of man to live up to those agreements. Of particular significance is the unconditional covenant that God made with Israel concerning a future Kingdom Age on earth, which the Covenantalist repudiates. Therefore, Dispensationalism allows for the ultimate fulfillment of all of God's promises, including all of those He made to Israel as a people and a nation.

Literal Interpretation of Scripture

Dispensationalists believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of all the original manuscripts of Scripture, by which they mean that each individual word, not just its cognitive content or concepts, was purposefully chosen under the specific direction of God – such that it is profitable for establishing sound doctrine, and for the rebuke of all false doctrine. Moreover, it is useful for personal correction and instruction in the path of righteousness (cf. 2Ti. 3:16).

For that reason, Dispensationalists insist upon a precise consistent literal interpretation of all the text of Scripture as it was originally written. This means that the text of Scripture must be interpreted with respect to its "plain meaning," which is derived from its words, its grammatical structure, and its local as well as its historical context.

[474]Unconditional covenants can also be referred to as "promissory covenants."

This method of literal interpretation is considered to more closely correspond to the original intent and purpose of its human authors in writing the text, as it was conveyed to them through the Holy Spirit.

Although Dispensationalists believe that Scripture clearly interprets Scripture, they do not believe in an externally formulated "analogy of faith" to which all Scriptural interpretation must be made to conform.[475]

Rejection of Replacement Theology

A precise literal interpretation of Scripture leads to the rejection of the Replacement Theology of Covenantalism.[476] In the Covenantal interpretation, the Church Age ends the series of covenants such that no Kingdom Age on earth is addressed. That omission defines a major difference between the dispensational and the Covenantal positions regarding the doctrine of the Church. Dispensationalists firmly believe in a future redemption of Israel as a people and as a nation. Therefore, all of the blessings God made to Israel through promissory covenants still apply to Israel, not to the Church.[477]

Therefore, Israel is not understood to be but a mere metaphor for the future Church, as the Covenantalist asserts. "Israel," when it is found in Scripture is always interpreted by Dispensationalists to mean the Jewish nation of Israel, and more specifically the direct descendants of Jacob. Thus, all of the blessings God made to Israel still apply to Israel – not to the Church.

Differentiation of Israel and the Church

At the time that those promises had been given to Israel, the Church had not yet been born from the riven side of Christ; the

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[475]cf. Analogy of Faith, page 450.

[476] cf. Replacement Theology, page 450.

[477]It would be absurd to believe that all the curses found in the Old Testament continue to apply to Israel, but that none of God's explicit blessings to them still apply.

Church only came to full fruition through the arrival of the Holy Spirit as an entirely new entity on the Day of Pentecost following Jesus' resurrection and ascension.[478] In the Greek, we find that the word for "congregation" or "assembly" is actually derived from the same word. That word is *ekklesia.* Thus, the Covenantalist assumes that the congregation or assembly of believers that existed within the nation of Israel must be identified directly with the New-Covenant assembly or "church." However, the English word "church" is actually derived from another Greek word, *kuriakos*, from which came the transliterated word, "kurk," or "church."

Therefore, the Dispensationalist views Israel and the Church as two distinct and separate bodies of believers to which God has administered differently. Israel was administered to within a strict dispensation of law, whereas the Church is administered to within a dispensation of grace that was attained through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, which Israel had adamantly rejected.

Dispensational Eschatology

Dispensational Eschatology is altogether different than Covenantalist Eschatology. Since the Covenantalist does not recognize a future Millennial age on earth, they are mostly concerned with the "here and now" and are only vaguely aware of an obscure final judgment to come at the end of this age.[479] The Dispensationalist on the other hand has much to consider regarding the last days because of their literal interpretation of Scripture, and especially so as a consequence of their literal interpretation of the text of the Revelation.

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[478]Although alluded to at times in the Old Testament, the Church as well as the Gospel was a "mystery" that was hidden away in the Old Testament to be later revealed in the New Testament (cf. Ro.16:25; Ep. 1:9; 3:9; 5:32; Col:1:27).

[479]As we have seen, the text of the Revelation is viewed by Covenantalists as historic allegory, not future-prophetic text.

Futurist Interpretation of the Revelation

The Dispensationalist considers all of the major events found in the Revelation as yet to be fulfilled in a future age immediately preceding and following the second advent of Jesus Christ – with the exception of the vision of the glorified Christ in Chapter 1 and the primary immediate context of the messages given to the seven first-century churches found within the next two chapters. This interpretation requires maintaining a very exacting literal-prophetic sense of the text, and it is the view that was held by many early Christians such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and many others.

Premillennialism

A literal-prophetic interpretation of the Revelation logically leads to an acceptance of the doctrine of Premillennialism. The relevant text, in which this thousand-year reign is mentioned six times, is found in the first seven verses of Revelation Chapter 20 as we earlier addressed within our Commentary section on page 381. The text specifically mentioning the Kingdom Age on earth is found in the text of Revelation 20:4: "and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

The Greek word *chilioi* found in these verses is very specific and unquestionably means "one thousand." Likewise, the Greek word *etos* clearly means "year." Those who believe that Christ Himself will physically return in the future to personally establish his thousand-year Kingdom of Heaven on earth are known as Pre-millennialists; that is, they believe that Christ will return just prior to the beginning of the Millennium.[480]

Pretribulationalism

Pretribulationalism is essentially a dispensational doctrine, closely associated with Premillennialism, which is based upon the belief that the Church will be removed from the earth prior to a seven-year period of extremely intense tribulation that will occur on earth beginning with the

[480]cf. Covenantalist Eschatology: Amillennialism, page 457 and Post-Millennialism, page 458.

reign of the Antichrist of the last days. It further assumes that an unrecorded Rapture of the Church has taken place between the texts of Revelation Chapters 3 and 4. This extra-biblical "secret Rapture" is supported by an additional premise that the twenty-four elders of Revelation 4 are Church elders, who represent the entire Raptured Church in Heaven. Because any discussion of this particular subject becomes rather involved, we have chosen to address it in some detail within an additional Article found on page 471 of this Addendum.

The Broad Acceptance of Dispensationalism

Since Dispensationalism, as a system of Bible interpretation is relatively new, dating back only to the early nineteenth century, many Christians distrust its observations as being opposed to the reformed view of Scripture developed during the Reformation era. Covenantalists argue that Dispensationalists have fabricated an external set of benchmarks based upon mere conjecture and have then forcibly applied them to Scripture, whereas their benchmarks are the Covenants that are actually recorded within Scripture.[481]

Darby's doctrine of Dispensationalism along with the doctrine of Pretribulationalism was readily adopted by American fundamentalists as they struggled hard against the highly destructive modernist movement that had infiltrated mainline Covenantalist churches worldwide (cf. *CRC* Book III, pages 331, 369).

While most reformed mainline denominations still hold fast to Covenantalism, Dispensationalism has now become universally accepted by most all of today's Baptists as well as a wide variety of other evangelical churches as fully settled doctrine. Moreover, elements of Dispensationalism are often found existing within the membership of other churches that officially continue to teach Covenantalism from the pulpit.

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[481] As we must note, however, the beginning of a dispensation coincides with the establishment of a Covenant, such that God's Covenants are not being ignored. Rather, Dispensationalists place their emphasis upon how God administers each of his Covenants with man.

Soteriology – the Doctrine of Salvation

Dispensationalists are for the most part Arminian in belief regarding the doctrine of salvation, which is based upon the teachings of Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius (AD 1560-1609). While Arminianism is most prominently found within the Methodist movement it can also be found in many other evangelical circles today including most contemporary Baptist churches. The Arminian had developed five points in direct opposition to biblical Calvinism, which are: 1) Human Free Will, 2) Conditional Election, 3) Unlimited Atonement, 4) Preparatory Grace, and 5) Conditional Preservation of the Saints. The five points of Calvinism were later formulated by the followers of John Calvin in opposition to non-biblical Arminianism (cf. page 458).

Arminianism stands in direct contrast to Calvinism, in that it places salvation squarely upon fallen man's ability to believe the Gospel trough an act of his human "free will" which is in some manner assumed to be compatible with God's absolute sovereignty. The Scriptures affirm that, outside of Christ, man is totally depraved, dead in his sin and repeated trespasses of God's divine Law, and are as such willing slaves to sin. They are therefore helpless to save themselves requiring God's divine intervention on their behalf (cf. Romans Chapters 1-3 and Ephesians Chapter 2). There is no biblical support for the notion that God has granted all of mankind a "preparatory grace" through Christ's atonement in order to overcome his inability through a voluntary act of his "free will." In fact, fallen man's will remains in bondage to Satan through Adam's fall until and unless God first sends the Holy Spirit to indwell and awaken them through a spiritual rebirth.

This doctrinal conflict is discussed in some detail within *CRC* Book I, *Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith,* Section 3, *Sovereignty of God and the Salvation of Man*.■

Pretribulationalism

We very briefly touched upon the topic of Pretribulationism in our Article on Dispensationalism found on page 468. Due to the extreme controversy surrounding this complex topic, we have deferred an in-depth discussion of it to this additional Article. Although commonly associated with the doctrine of Premillennialism, we shall discover that it is entirely possible to fully embrace Premillennialism without adhering to the doctrine of Pretribulationism.

Simply stated, Pretribulationalism is a doctrine based upon John Nelson Darby's[482] assertion that the church will be removed from the earth prior to a seven-year period of extremely intense tribulation. In this Article we shall closely examine two preliminary premises that Darby made to arrive at that conclusion. Those two premises are that:

1. an unrecorded[483] Rapture of the Church has occurred between chapters 3 and 4 of the Revelation prior to the coming reign of the Antichrist, who is first described in Revelation Chapter 6 as the rider of a white horse
2. the twenty-four Elders of Revelation Chapter 4 are the Elders of the previously Raptured Church.

Although broadly accepted as fact by most all of today's Dispensationalists, there are difficulties regarding both of these premises that must be resolved if we are to accept that Darby's assertion concerning a Pre-tribulation Rapture has any sound basis.

The "Secret" Rapture of the Church

In the first statement above, Darby asserted that the Rapture must have occured just prior to the beginning of Revelation Chapter 4. Inasmuch as this event is not recorded within Scripture, it is commonly re-

[482]cf. brief biography on John Nelson Darby on page 460.

[483]cf. Commentary on page 176 regarding the Church of Philadelphia in Chapter 3 as an assumptive chronological argument for the Rapture of the true Church prior to Chapter 4.

ferred to as a "secret" or "hidden" Rapture. Considered by itself, this statement has no Scriptural evidence to support it and could be summarily dismissed. However, it is rationalized to be true by statement 2 above that asserts that the twenty-four Elders of Chapter 4 are Elders of the previously Raptured Church.

The interdependence between this "secret Rapture" and the assumed identity of the twenty-four Elders who are first seen in Revelation Chapter 4, verse 4 is highly problematic, for it is clearly based upon circular reasoning. That is, if the unrecorded "secret Rapture" had not occurred, there is no valid reason to believe that the twenty-four Elders are associated in any way with the Church; and if the Elders do not represent the entire Church in Heaven, there is no valid basis to assume that a hidden Rapture of the Church had previously taken place at all!

The Twenty-four Elders

Inasmuch as there is no biblical text directly supporting a secret Rapture, Pretribulationalism is squarely based upon Darby's insistence that the twenty-four Elders, which John saw in Revelation Chapter 4, represent the presence of the Raptured Church in Heaven. It is imperative that the Dispensationalist prove with absolute certainty that the twenty-four Elders are indeed representative of the Raptured Church in its entirety. In the extensive text that follows, we shall alternately attempt to either prove or disprove that assumption.

First, we must consider that a chronological anomaly exists within the text of the Revelation if these are Christian Elders found here in Chapter 4, for they appear to be seated in Heaven before the throne of God prior to the appearance of Jesus Christ in Chapter 5. In fact, the Elders appear to be eyewitnesses of Christ's sudden appearance, who is described by John as "a Lamb as it had been slain" (cf. Jn. 1:29):

> **"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"** (Re. 5:6).

Jesus' ascension had taken place some ten days before Pentecost. The Church did not officially exist until Jesus sent his Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost some fifty days after his bodily resurrection from the dead. Therefore, it would seem odd that Church Elders would be mentioned as existing in Heaven prior to the first appearance of Christ in Heaven.[484]

Setting that chronological anomaly aside as being inconclusive, Revelation 4:4 and 5:9,10 are the central texts from which Dispensationalists derive their dogmatic insistence that the twenty-four Elders do in fact represent the Raptured Church, which is at that time safely in Heaven. We shall begin our discussion of these two texts with an analysis of the identity of the twenty-four Elders whose first appearance is found in Revelation 4:4:

> **"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"** (Re.4:4)

Jesus' Apostles would immediately come to mind for receiving seats within this assembly, but the fact that these Elders number twenty-four immediately excludes the possibility of it being entirely composed of Jesus' Apostles, who numbered but twelve.[485] A few would point out that the apostles possessed "dual identities" both as Jews and as Christians, thus in that way accounting for the number twenty-four, but this could hardly explain why John actually saw twenty-four individual Elders.

Others see the twenty-four Elders as being made up of two groups of twelve – although we must note that the text does not validate that division. If Jesus' Apostles only make up half of this Heavenly council, it

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[484]It could be assumed that Jesus Christ had ascended earlier only to present Himself before the throne at this instant, but there is absolutely no Scriptural evidence that this could be so. The phrase "as it had been slain" would seem to indicate that Christ had not yet been glorified by the Father; thus, it must be assumed that He had just arrived in Heaven from the earth (cf. Ac. 1:9).

[485]John was one of the original twelve Apostles. Therefore, we must also point out the irrational notion of the Apostle John observing himself as an Elder seated as one of the twenty-four.

would then become necessary to speculate concerning the identity of the remaining twelve. Some commentators attempt to undertake this highly controversial task by identifying them with various notable Christian men from various periods of church history – even unto our present day. This extended process, lacks any support from Scripture, inasmuch as the twenty-four Elders were obviously present in Heaven prior to the arrival of Christ, the slain Lamb.

Although the preponderance of Bible commentators persist that these twenty-four Elders must in some way represent the Church, we must note that the word "elder" (Greek, *presbuteros*) is not exclusively used as titles for church leaders; for example, in Hebrews 11:2, *presbuteros*, is directly applied to the ancient forefathers of Israel. Therefore, Dispensationalist doctrine aside, all or part of those Elders could very well be prominent men that were chosen by God out of the Old-Covenant era prior to the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Having been unable to precisely determine the identity of the twenty-four Elders from verse 4:4, we shall now continue on to analyze the second text found in Revelation Chapter 5:

> "**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"** (Re.5:8).

We must concede that "the twenty-four Elders found here in verse 8 refers to the twenty-four Elders of verse 4. who along with the four living creatures fall down in reverence before the Lamb.

> [9]**And <u>they</u> 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 <u>us</u> to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; [10]and hast made <u>us</u> unto our God kings and priests: and <u>we</u> shall reign on the earth"** (Re. 5:9,10; underscores added)**.**

In verse 9 above, we find the pronoun "us," (Greek: *hēmas*) which asserts that the twenty-four Elders are included among those who were redeemed by the blood of Christ, and in verse 10 the pronouns "us" and "we" asserts that they have also been made "kings and priests" unto God.[486] Loosely interpreted, this could be seen to identify the Elders as a "kingdom of priests" – a term that could be seen to loosely identify them as members of the Church (cf. 1Pe.2:9; Re. 1:6). Nevertheless, we find that the four living creatures also join with the twenty-four Elders in singing this new song. This is highly problematic, for the four living creatures are not mortal men, but are perfect Holy creatures of a far different order of perfection having no need of redemption.

If we could somehow disregard the claim of the four beasts, who are not Elders, this text would appear to settle the identity controversy in favor of Darby's assumption that the twenty-four Elders represent the presence of the Raptured Church in Heaven. Even so, verse 10 states that Christ, the Lamb, "hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." This statement is also somewhat problematic. The word "shall" would indicate that theirs is to be a future reign on earth – presumably within a future coming age. While in the Kingdom Age resurrected saints of the Church age will reign as kings over Gentile nations under Christ, it will be but sanctified Jews who will reign in resurrected bodies as priests upon the earth, as they serve within a Millennial Temple.

As problematic as those two issues are in establishing that the twenty-four Elders are overseers of the Church, they are not the greatest obstacles we have to overcome; for there is also a serious translation anomaly within the *AKJV* text that must also be considered as well.

Problematic Translation Anomaly

The *AKJV* text that is quoted above and is used throughout this work, was translated from an early Greek manuscript published by the

[486]There is a potential problem associated with them being both "kings and priests" as is stated in Revelation 5:10. We explore that difficulty within an additional Article, The Mysterious Order of Melchizedek found on page 480 of this Addendum.

humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus in 1516 AD[487] and after a few early corrections became known as the *Textus Receptus* or *Received Text*. This text was in extensive use by the early reformers and as such it shaped the spearhead of the reform effort during the Protestant Reformation era. Therefore, the *AKJV* and the underlying *Textus Receptus* is most likely the text that John Darby used when formulating his dispensational system of Bible interpretation.

Modern-day versions of the Bible are translated from later Greek texts compiled from many later discovered but often older manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts placed together and compared in their original language. For that reason, they are often judged by many to be more accurate than the *Textus Receptus*. Those later texts are the *Westcott and Hort Greek Text* first published in 1881 and the Eberhard Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece* first published in 1898 (cf. *CRC* Book I, page 32).[488]

Although no major doctrines are altered by these newer manuscripts, variations within the text of Revelation 5 verses 9 and 10 are quite significant regarding our effort to precisely identify the twenty-four Elders. Modern-day English translations, which are commonly translated from one or both of these later Greek texts, essentially replace the first person plural pronoun "us" (Greek: *ἡμᾶς* or *hēmas*), as it is found in Revelation 5 verses 9 and 10 of the *AKJV,* with the third person plural pronoun "them" (Greek: *αυτούς*). Likewise, "we" in verse 10 is replaced with "they." We also note that "kings" as found in the *AKJV* in the latter texts is rendered "kingdom," which is translated from the Greek word, *basileia.* Examples of the consequence of this alteration are found in three prominent English texts of the Bible as follows:

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[487]cf. *CRC* Book III, page 224.

[488] It must be noted that the authors of these newer composite texts have been accused by some of harboring personal Roman-Catholic bias that affected textual integrity. Some have even viewed this later effort as an organized Roman Catholic conspiracy to intentionally adulterate the text of Scripture inasmuch as many of the underlying Greek text fragments and manuscripts used were found within Monasteries and even within the Vatican itself.

The *American standard Version* of 1901 (*ASV*) reads, "And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth" (underlines added).

The *New American Standard Bible* (*NASB)* reads, "And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy art Thou to take the book and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" (underlines added).

Similarly, the *English Standard Version* (*ESV*) reads, "and they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (underlines added).

The preponderance of evidence found within all three of these later translations indicate that the four beasts and the twenty-four Elders are external observers. They are thereby effectively all but excluding themselves from being a part of the redeemed people specifically spoken of in this passage – who have been made a kingdom of priests to their God through the blood of Christ.

Possible Jewish Identity of the Elders

This leads us to consider another possibility. Since we cannot categorically prove that the twenty-four Elders are honored men of the Church, we could assume that they are ancient Jews, who were redeemed by grace through the blood of Christ, yet were separated in time from the later Church-age. Even assuming that to be so, the question remains regarding who those ancient Elders are in a mortal sense. They could, of course, be men such as Job, Abraham, and still other Old-

Covenant worthies who through believing and trusting God were declared to be righteous in his sight (cf. Ga. 3:6).

Those worthies could have been included among the many saints who arose from their graves at Jesus' resurrection and are assumed to have went Heavenward with the Lord Jesus in his ascension as the "first fruits" of those who were to be saved:

> **"[51]And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; [52]and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, [53]and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many"** (Mt. 27:51-53).

We could further assume that half of these Elders that had arisen were the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Nu.1:21-46), and that perhaps the second half could have been the twelve judges who ruled over Israel during the time of the Judges.[489] In addition, there were eighteen Old-Testament prophets of record in the Scriptures, whose number obviously falls short of the required total of twenty-four and is greater than twelve, but at least some of them could perhaps be included in this great Heavenly council.

It has also been noted by some that the number twenty-four is indicative of the Levitical priesthood of Israel. Levitical Priests served within twenty-four courses in the Temple, each course serving for one week at a time (1Chr.24:1–19). Lastly, we note that in the *AKJV* text these twenty-four Elders said that they had been made "kings and priests" (cf. Re.5:10), neither of which is a legitimate office within the Church. The notion of an existence of an ancient order of priest-kings leads to a far more abstruse discussion that we have included within a

[489]Again, we note that Scripture does not indicate that the twenty-four elders are so divided. It is also important to note regarding this latter assumption that Deborah was a woman, who judged Israel (cf. Jg. 4:4). Therefore, she cannot be properly referred to as an elder, all of whom must be men by definition.

separate article entitled The Mysterious Order of Melchizedek on page 480 of this Addendum.

We now find ourselves within the deep weeds of argument; for all of this has become speculation upon speculation in a failed attempt to precisely identify the twenty-four Elders as exalted officers of the Church. That fact has led this author to respectfully reject Darby's notion of an extra-biblical "secret rapture" of the Church and to accept instead a description of the Raptured Church appearing in Heaven that is actually recorded within the text of the Revelation.[490] ■

[490] cf. The Church Appears in Heaven, on page 215 of the Commentary; and the Post-tribulation-Pre-wrath Rapture of the Church, on page 510 of this Addendum.

The Mysterious Order of Melchizedek

We have determined within our Commentary, through a careful exposition of the text in Revelation Chapters 4 and 5, that the twenty-four Elders before God's throne cannot be proven from Scripture to be Elders of the Raptured Church.[491] We then explored the possibility that they could be Old-Testament saints of high rank and office. Nevertheless, we had considerable difficulty identifying which of the Old-Testament saints they could have been; admittedly, none in the past seemed to fit this Heavenly group conclusively. Moreover, their precise number, twenty four, greatly contributed to the difficulty of determining their identity.

We also noted a problematic text in the *AKJV* version of the Revelation found in Chapter 5,[492] in which these twenty-four Elders stated that they had been made "kings and priests" unto God:

> **""And <u>hast</u> made us unto our God <u>kings and priests</u>: and we <u>shall</u> reign on the earth"** (Re. 5:10 emphasis added).

This text is recorded in the past tense (i.e. hast), thus implying that those titles had been conferred upon them earlier – possibly on earth before their present exalted state before God's throne in Heaven.[493]

Then, they say that they "shall" reign on the earth – implying a future reign. This could be interpreted to mean that some of their number

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[491]The insistence that these twenty-four elders are elders of the Church came from the dispensational teachings of John Nelson Darby within an associated doctrine of Pretribulationism. We have discussed Pretribulationalism in some detail within a separate article by that title found on page 471 of this Addendum.

[492]cf. Problematic Translation Anomaly, page 475.

[493]This is even more difficult to rationalize when we realize that the four living beasts had joined with the twenty-four elders in singing those words.

will serve as kings, and the remainder as priests. However, we have no reason to presume that from the underlying Greek text. Assuming instead that they are claiming to hold a dual title of king and priest, this claim becomes highly problematic, inasmuch as throughout the Old Testament the offices of priest and king were held to be completely separate and sacrosanct. So much so that civil rulers and kings such as King Saul who had presumed to encroach upon the duties of the office of priest (cf. 1Sa. 13:9-14) were severely punished by God – still others such as Nadab and Abihu had suffered death (cf. Nu. 26:61). Likewise, the priests of the Levitical priesthood were not to become entangled in civil affairs as do kings, but were to exclusively devote their lives to representing the people of Israel before the presence of God through their Temple ministrations.

Be all that as it may, some expositors insist that there was indeed a select number of Old Testament men who had in fact uniquely held titles of both priest and king simultaneously. If so, there is a shadowy mystery surrounding that order that Scripture does not completely reveal to us, such that it cannot be resolved to our satisfaction. So much so that many insist that this mysterious order has not and does not actually exist at all.

This subject becomes so deeply involved in supposition and textual speculation that we chose not to discuss it in the limited context of our Commentary as providing a possible identity of the twenty-four Elders of Revelation chapter 4 verses 4 and 10. Undertaking a discussion of this mysterious shadowy order carries with it the risk of introducing error by addition, while to neglect it could make us guilty of the error of omission (cf. Re. 22:19). Therefore, we shall now undertake this delicate subject with no small amount of trepidation as we contemplate the mysterious "Melchizedek" of the Old Testament along with the possible implications surrounding him.

Even the word "Melchizedek" is a rather awkward Hebrew construct, which is apparently derived from two Hebrew root words: *malki* (or *melek*), which is generally interpreted to mean "king," and *tsedek* meaning "right," "moral," or "righteous." Put together, *Malki-tsedek* is thus interpreted "king of righteousness" (cf. He.7:2). "Melchizedek" is

first mentioned in three isolated verses of Genesis 14, again in Psalm 110, and finally in a flurry of verses in Hebrews 5,6, and 7 in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ as our great eternal King and High Priest.

We shall begin with three verses found in Genesis 14:18-20, but before we do so we need to provide a Scriptural background for them, which is recorded in Genesis 14:1-17. In brief, a raid had taken place in which four kings of an eastern land had attacked five small kingdoms established near the Dead Sea in the land of Canaan. The four kings of the east prevailed in the attack and extracted spoils and captives from the five kingdoms of Canaan. Having done so, the victors began their triumphant journey home.

One of the Canaanite kingdoms that was pillaged was Sodom in which Abraham's nephew Lot lived, and he and his family were among those taken captive. When Abraham heard of this, he gathered together 318 trained men of his extended household and gave rapid pursuit. In a surprise two-pronged attack, Abraham was victorious over what must otherwise be viewed as an overwhelmingly superior enemy. Abraham returned the spoils and the captives, including Lot and his family, to their homelands. Having done so, Abraham adamantly refused to take any reward from the five kings of Canaan for himself – especially not from the king of Sodom who had offered it to him in accordance with the ancient code of Hammurabi.[494]

Melchizedek Blessed Abraham

After this event takes place, comes three enigmatic verses seemingly out of nowhere and without any explanation:

> **"[18]And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he** *was* **the priest of the most high God. [19]And he blessed him, and said, Blessed** *be*

[494]Hammurabi (ca. 1810 – ca. 1750 BC) was the sixth king of the first Babylonian dynasty of an Amorite tribe who reigned from ca. 1792 BC to ca. 1750 BC. He established a code of conduct that was written down on twelve stones, which were publicly displayed. That code had carried over into the days of Abraham where it was generally honored to resolve various disputes.

> **Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: [20]And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all"** (Ge.14:18-20).

Here we discover that Melchizedek was both a "priest of the most high God," and that he was also the king of a city-state named Salem. The writer to the Hebrews later refers to Melchizedek as the king of righteousness and of peace, and indirectly refers to Salem as the city of peace:

> **"[1]For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; [2]To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;** (He. 7:1, 2)**.**

It could be assumed that there would have been many small city -states about the area in that day, and more than a few could have claimed the name Salem. However, a notable Jebusite-occupied [495] city-state was the walled city that Israel's King David had later conquered to be the capitol city of his nation and to house the Tabernacle of God. David renamed the Jebusite city-state "Jeru-salem." At a later time David wrote concerning it,

> **"[1]In Judah is God known: his name** *is* **great in Israel. [2]In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion"** (Ps. 76:1,2).

Thus, we find that Salem (Sion or Zion), can be seen to correspond directly to David's city of Jerusalem, which could in fact have once

[495]Jebusites a were wicked Canaanite people who worshiped false gods and engaged in human sacrifice. The Israelites were instructed by God to drive the Jebusites out of the Promised Land and to destroy their city.

been the very city in which Melchizedek had been king and priest at the time of Abraham.[496]

A Priest-King Order of Melchizedek?

We find when we defer to the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews that Melchizedek apparently constituted an "order" so interpreted from the Greek word *taxis*, which can be defined as an arrangement made through time or a long succession of rank (cf. He. 5:6, 10 ff.). This has led some expositors to speculate that the existence of an "order of Melchizedek" means that many men on earth had previously held this high office during specific periods of time throughout the ages. In their times, men holding this unique dual title were enabled to consult directly with God as a priest representing mankind, while they had simultaneously exercised legal dominion over a realm and its population as a king.

Logically, the first man to occupy such a powerful office would have been Adam, who was created fully mature having no antecedents or beginning of days. God not only conferred upon Adam dominion over the earth, He also granted him full access to his divine being as He regularly walked with him in the garden. Therefore, Adam can be seen to have held the high office of priest and king as the federal head of the entire human race, as he exercised that dominion in close fellowship with God for a period of many days[497] before Satan arrived upon the scene to successfully seduce Eve to disobey God. Adam readily followed Eve's

[496]It has been generally assumed that Melchizedek who came out to meet Abraham was this man's name, but it is better understood that Melchizedek was a title that had been inferred upon this man who was the king of the city-state of Salem.

[497] We have no actual biblical record of the length of this period, but an interval of time is implied during which God had regularly walked with Adam in the garden – before he had sinned in Genesis 3:8-10. Inasmuch as Adam and Eve had been ordered to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis 1:28. and there is no evidence that Eve had given birth prior to the fall, this period certainly could not have been any longer than a few months.

leading, such that he likewise sinned and rebelled against God. In doing so, Adam had so abused his intended function on earth as priest-king that the exercise of his dominion and the privilege of his access to God necessarily came to an abrupt end.

Some speculate that the vacated office itself continued on through a successive order of other men acting as "place holders" until one day a sinless man would come forth to claim it forever. That man would of course be Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is also very much the "son of man" for whom the office had been held in trust.

Adam's rebellion had brought forth the curse of death upon the entire human race such that it can be supposed that his title was soon thereafter conferred upon Seth,[498] the third son of Adam to ensure its perpetuation after Adam's death. Although Seth brought forth what the Scripture refers to as a godly line of men, he still carried within him an inherited sin nature such that he too must ultimately die – even as did Adam.

Therefore, before the death of Seth, it can be supposed that the title was conferred upon Enoch, who, as it is written, walked closely with God. After Enoch was translated from earth into Heaven, the title was apparently conferred upon Methuselah, and then it would most certainly have been given to Noah – inasmuch as God had determined to severely judge the evil inhabitants of the earth with annihilation in a massive global flood and to continue the human race through him. It must be understood however that all of this succession is mere speculation inasmuch as Scripture does not explicitly confirm the existence of any such line of men as a continuation of Adam's office.

Following the flood, Noah began to age, and the office of Melchizedek presumably fell upon Shem, one of the three sons of Noah. Shem lived a total of 600 years: about 100 years before and about 500 years after the great flood. Therefore, it would seem that it could have been Shem who was still living and held the title of Melchizedek who brought forth bread and wine and blessed Abraham.[499]

Nevertheless, there is considerable difficulty in considering Shem for this high position. First, it must be noted that the writer to the He-

[498]Seth means the substituted one, replacing Able, who would carry forth the godly line.

brews describes Melchizedek as having no mother or father (cf. He.7:3), which Shem most assuredly did; his father was in fact Noah and his mother was Noah's wife.[500]

Secondly, it must be noted that the likelihood of Shem being a contemporary of Abraham is based upon Old-Testament translations derived from the Masoretic text compiled by Rabbinical Jews in the seventh to tenth century AD from an earlier Hebrew text that had existed in the first century.[501] It was subsequently copied and edited as required to better conform it to the teachings of Rabbinical Judaism.

Therefore, the Masoretic text deviates in various aspects from the earlier Hebrew text, the Greek Septuagint,[502] as well as the recorded history of Josephus who would have had access to the earlier Hebrew manuscript as well as the Septuagint. Unfortunately, the *AKJV* as well as all other Protestant Bibles are largely based upon the later edited Masoretic text, which can at times lead to some unusual or unresolved anomalies.

Concerning the descendants of Shem, a glaring omission of 100 years exists within the Masoretic text for each of the recorded ages of the fathers in Genesis 11:10-26 at the time their sons were born. As but one example of the six altered verses, Genesis 11:12 reads in the *AKJV*, "And Arphaxad lived five and thirty years, and begat Salah:" The Septuagint adds 100 years to the thirty-five years making Arphaxad's lifespan

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[499]The only grounds for assuming that Shem took on this title is found within an unreliable non-canonical book.

[500] Noah's wife is not named in Scripture, but by tradition her name was *Naamah*, meaning "pleasant".

[501] The dead sea scrolls apparently were copied portions of that ancient text, but they do not constitute a complete document.

[502] The Septuagint (often found abbreviated by the Roman numerals LXX) is a *Koine Greek* translation of the old Hebrew Text. It was completed in the second century BC by a group of seventy-two scholars (six representing each of the twelve tribes of Israel) for Greek speaking Alexandrian Jews. It was quoted several times by the Apostle Paul in his epistles and by early apostolic and Greek Church "fathers." It is now commonly rejected by mainstream Judaism.

before he begat Salah one-hundred thirty-five. By repeatedly omitting this 100 years. the Masoretic text implies that all of Shem's recorded descendants up to Abram had died one after another all within the greater lifetime of Shem.

However, in the earlier Hebrew manuscript, as is verified by the Septuagint, it is explicit that the sons and grandsons all lived well beyond the death of Shem, as could reasonably be expected. Therefore, the earlier unedited Hebrew manuscript would refute any notion that Melchizedek of Abraham's day could have been Shem, who had died long before Abraham was born to Terah.[503]

Considering the Septuagint to be a credible translation of the unaltered Old-Testament text, it becomes impossible to be dogmatic about the identity of any of this shadowy line of priestly kings – assuming that the order ever existed at all upon the earth – prior to the appearance of Melchizedek in Genesis 14.[504]

Did Melchizedek Serve the Lord's Supper to Abraham?

As Jesus celebrated his last Passover meal with his disciples, He instituted at the very end of that feast a perpetual memorial to his death involving the simple staples of bread and wine. We find that Melchizedek of Genesis 14 shared something quite similar to this memorial with Abraham many centuries earlier.

Not surprisingly, some have attempted to identify Melchizedek as the pre-incarnate Christ, but this is not at all credible inasmuch as Jesus Christ cannot be a type or an antecedent of Himself, as the writer to the Hebrews plainly states in the text we shall consider in more

[503]It should be noted, as a significant aside, that accepting the accuracy of the Septuagint over the Masoretic text regarding these ages pushes the genealogical calculation for the date of the global flood back 600 years from 2350 to 2950 BC, and it also pushes Bishop Ussher's calculated date of creation back from 4004 to 4604 BC.

[504]That this order could somehow exist only in Heaven is obviously beyond the scope of our human knowledge.

detail below. Moreover, bread and wine was a common and essential food in that day, such that this verse could merely be saying that Melchizedek provided a meal of bread and wine, and perhaps other food, for Abraham to satisfy his hunger and thirst following his arduous victory and journey.

Nevertheless, it is stated that Abraham paid tithes[505] through Melchizedek as he would have only done if he recognized him to be a valid Steward and High Priest of God (cf. Ge.14:18-20). As the writer to the Hebrews later said of him,

> **"Now consider how great this man** *was,* **unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils"** (He, 7:4).

Some assume that through the ritual act of Melchizedek, Abraham became the next "office holder" within the order of Melchizedek. It is further assumed that Abraham later transferred this dual office to Isaac who in turn conferred this title through his blessing upon Jacob. We could then presume that Jacob in his old age conferred this office upon Joseph through his blessing. Continuing on after Joseph the office of Melchizedek eventually was assigned by God to Moses, who led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Moses in turn passed the office on to Joshua. Of course, none of this sequence is provable, and after this series of men, any rational effort to trace this supposed order any further becomes increasingly difficult or impossible – until we reach the arrival of Jesus Christ of whom Melchizedek was a specific type.

Melchizedek Presented as a Type

Turning now to the epistle to the Hebrews, we should understand at the outset that the author[506] is speaking to Hebrew Christians who are neglecting the regular assembling of the Church (cf. He.10:25) in favor

[505]Most likely tithes of the personal spoils he had recovered with God's miraculous assistance.

[506]We firmly believe that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews was the Apostle Paul, but we did not think it was necessary to press that point in this current discussion.

of continuing worship within the Temple. They were thus in great danger of falling back into the old rituals of Judaism – including the blasphemous[507] offering up of blood sacrifices through the Levitical priesthood. They were continuing to do so even as the day was rapidly approaching when all practice of the sacrificial law would come to an abrupt end in AD 70 with the complete destruction of the Temple complex by the armies of Rome.

The writer of Hebrews is not attempting to define Melchizedek in his epistle. Rather, he is speaking of the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ by comparing Him to Melchizedek of Genesis 14 who represented a type of royal priesthood that predates and is therefore superior to the Levitical priesthood. Christ is properly described as our High Priest who is "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (He.7:3).

> **"[9]And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. [10]For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him"** (He.7:9,10).

Here the writer is demonstrating the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus Christ over the Levitical priesthood who had long ago paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham:

> **"[15]And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, [16]who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. [17]For he testifieth, Thou** *art* **a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec"** (He.7:15-17).

Whereas a Levitical priest was declared to be so through the laying on of human hands by the law of a carnal commandment, Jesus Christ is

[507]Those rituals had become blasphemous inasmuch as this continued practice denied the sufficiency of Jesus' final blood sacrifice of his own body upon the cross – to which those rituals had pointed.

declared to be our High Priest as a consequence of his ageless life that has no beginning or end – in a similar manner of that which was said of Melchizedek.

> **"As he saith also in another** *place*, **Thou** *art* **a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec"** (He.5:6).

The text the writer refers to here is found in Psalm 110, in which the coming Messiah (i.e. the Christ) is described by David as a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek:

> **"[1]The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. [2]The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. [3]Thy people** *shall be* **willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, [4]Thou** *art* **a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"** (Ps.110:1-4).

The writer to the Hebrews goes on in considerable detail demonstrating how this title applies forever to the Lord Jesus Christ as the ultimate and the last within this mysterious order of Melchizedek as a type:

> **"[8]Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; [9]and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; [10]called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec"** (He.5:8-10).

Conclusion

We must admit that Melchizedek represented an ancient religious order in Salem, which had existed in some form upon the earth long before the Levitical priesthood was established. In the days of Melchizedek, as is found in Genesis 14, that future Aaronic priesthood had only existed within the loins of Abraham – as the writer of the book

of Hebrews related when he compared Melchizedek with Christ our Great High-priest, who being eternal in Heaven likewise had no earthly antecedents.

While we must concede that it is barely possible that the twenty-four Elders that John saw seated before the throne of God in Heaven were once priest-kings of an ancient order of Melchizedek, which had been earlier established upon the earth, there is no firm Scriptural support for that assumption; nor can we determine from the text of the Revelation that the twenty-four Elders are, or were, Church Elders – or for that matter, that they were in anyway related to the Church.

Thus, the mystery concerning the precise identity of the twenty-four Elders that John first saw seated before the throne of God in Revelation 4 still remains – as does the age-old mystery surrounding the ancient order of Melchizedek. ■

The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church

The purpose of this article is to clarify three important issues. Those are: 1) the Rapture[508] of the Church, 2) the Day of the Lord, and 3) the prevailing Immanency Doctrine regarding the return of Christ. Each of those topics was addressed by the Apostle Paul in his two recorded epistles to the Thessalonians, which forms the textual basis for this current discussion.

Paul's primary purpose on his second and third missionary journeys was to continue to spread forth the Gospel of salvation found only in Jesus Christ. On the second of those two journeys he arrived with Silas at Thesoloniaca, where there was a synagogue of the Jews (cf. Ac.17:1). He spent three sabbaths showing Jews from the Old-Testament Scriptures that it was necessary for Messiah to suffer and to be raised again from the dead by the Father to prove that Jesus was indeed their long-awaited Messiah (cf. Ac.17:2,3).

Paul's Discussion of the Last Days

Beyond that, Paul had apparently begun discussing the doctrines of the last days. However, due to the strong animosity of many of the Jews living in Thessalonica against the Gospel, his visit with them had to be cut short before he could complete that dissertation (cf. Ac. 17:5-10). Therefore, Paul found it necessary to write two epistles to them concerning various issues regarding the last days that they had misconstrued from his earlier teaching that had been interrupted.

Issues Regarding the Rapture of the Church

The first issue that Paul needed to clarify concerned the coming Rapture of the Church. As believers in Thessalonica anxiously awaited the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, they had become greatly concerned

[508] cf. Regarding Our Frequent Use of the Word "Rapture" , page 84.

regarding some of their members who had died before Jesus had returned for his Church, thus fearing that their loved ones had lost out on this blessed event. In his first epistle, Paul addressed that concern with these words:

> **"[13]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. [14]For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"** (1Th.4:13-14).

Paul states that their sorrow is based upon their ignorance concerning the true status of those believers who had already died in Christ. They are not spiritually dead as are unbelievers who have no hope in Christ. Believing that Jesus died and rose again, they can be assured that those who had died in Christ will in like-manner one day return with Him to receive resurrected bodies.

> **[15]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 not prevent them which are asleep. [16]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"** (1 Th. 4:15,16):

We who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not forestall them which have previously died in Christ. Hence, the first portion of the Rapture will consist of the resurrection, transformation, and transport of a great multitude of believers who had died in Christ prior to the Rapture.

In verse 16 it is stated that the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the "voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." Interpreted this means that the shout of Christ will be as powerful as the voice of an archangel and as loud as a trumpet, not that He will enlist an archangel blowing a trumpet to announce his return.

> **"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** (1Th. 4:17).

This prophecy concerning the Rapture is not merely Paul's opinion, for in First Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 15 he clearly said, this prophecy came "by the word of the Lord." Therefore, we can know with absolute certainty that this miraculous event will one day occur:

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1Th 4:18).

Paul also wrote within his epistle to the Corinthians concerning this mystery of the transformation and transport of the living and the dead within the Rapture wherein he said:

> **"[51]Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, [52]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. [53]For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal** *must* **put on immortality"** (1Co.15:51-53).

Flesh and blood mortals cannot inherit the Kingdom of God in Heaven (cf. 1Co.15:50). Therefore, whether our bodies sleep in death or remain alive on earth at Jesus' final call for his Church to join Him in the air, we must all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, into immortal incorruptible bodies that are fully capable of inheriting the wondrous environs of Heaven.

As Paul went on to say to the Corinthians, death will lose its sting and the grave will lose its hold on the body, such that death will be swallowed up in great victory for those who are in Christ Jesus:

> **"[54]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. [55]O death, where** *is* **thy sting? O grave, where** *is* **thy**

> **victory? [56]The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. [57]But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"** (1Co.15:54-57).

As the time of the Rapture draws near, a great persecution and apostasy of the faith will most likely have thinned the true Church on earth such that the faithful in Christ, who remain alive, will have been greatly reduced in number. Be that as it may, immediately following the resurrection of the dead in Christ, all of those chosen who remain alive upon the earth will likewise be transformed and transported into the air[509] to forever be with Christ.[510]

Appearance of a Great Multitude in Heaven

Nowhere in the Scriptures do we find a text explicitly stating that the translation and transport (i.e. the Rapture) of the true Church into Heaven is actually taking place. We would especially expect to find that text in the book of the Revelation, wherein all prophecies concerning the last days are ultimately fulfilled, yet there is no absolute statement indicating that the Rapture is actually taking place.

Although not explicitly stated as the miraculous transport of the Church in the text, there is one passage in the book of the Revelation where the Church suddenly appears in Heaven before the throne of God.

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[509] It must be noted that verse 17 clearly states that both the living and the dead in Christ shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet with the Lord in the "air." The English word "air" is translated from the Greek word *aer*, which literally means "to breathe." Thus interpreted, we shall initially meet Christ among the clouds – within the breathable atmosphere above the earth. However, once we all gather with Him in the air, we will be immediately transported together to a place that He has especially prepared for his own in Heaven, there to live and abide with Him throughout eternity (cf. Jn.14:3).

[510] Unlike many popular scenarios to the contrary, it is most probable that the apostate along with the reprobate, who have been left behind upon the earth, will scarcely notice the disappearance of the small faithful Christian remnant, as they continue on in their iniquitous worship of the Antichrist just prior to their coming judgment during the Great Day of the Lord (cf. Issues Regarding the Day of the Lord, below on page 497.

Very few Dispensationalists would emphatically deny that this great multitude found in Revelation Chapter 7:9-17 is indeed the appearance of the Church in Heaven.

Nevertheless, some Dispensationalists maintain that the Church has been in Heaven all along, having been transported there previously in an unrecorded "secret Rapture,"[511] and that their presence was previously represented by the twenty-four elders of Revelation Chapter 4 verse 4. Consequently, they must assume that this great multitude in Heaven had merely assembled themselves before God's throne some time after the Rapture had previously taken place.

Other Dispensationalists maintain that this great multitude consists only of those saints who were martyred during the seven years of the "great tribulation period"[512] – and that it therefore does not represent the Church in total. This assertion is commonly derived from the following text:

> **"[9]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: [10]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? [11]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"** (Re.6:9-11).

As we stated on page 201 of our Commentary, there is nothing in this text that specifically identifies these martyred souls as Christians. We believe that those spoken of here are in fact the countless God-fearing Jews who have been despised, mistreated, and systematically massacred by Gentile nations over many centuries. Christians accept the death

[511]cf. The "Secret" Rapture of the Church, page 471.

[512]cf. The Great Tribulation Period, page 532.

of Jesus Christ as the final sacrifice for sin, thus they reject any sacrificial system that would deny that fact. They do not have any temple, which would be necessary to support such a system, and an altar of animal sacrifice for forgiveness of sins is totally foreign, even blasphemous, to Christians.

We therefore believe that the sudden appearance of this great multitude in Heaven found in Revelation Chapter 7 provides sufficient evidence of the fact that the miraculous transport (i.e. the Rapture) of the Church had just taken place – a view that we have held and continue to hold throughout this exposition of the Revelation.

Issues Regarding the Day of the Lord

Immediately after assuring the Thessalonians about the security of believers who had died in Christ before his return, the Apostle Paul addressed another of their concerns. They had come to believe that the severe persecution and suffering that they were currently experiencing was a consequence of God's wrath falling upon them. They feared that they somehow had been overlooked in the Rapture, and that they had subsequently entered into the terrifying period of time that Paul had earlier referred to as the Day of the Lord. Paul begins by briefly reiterating his earlier discussion with them concerning this period:

> **"[1]But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. [2]For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. [3]For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape"** (1Th 5:1-3).

We find that Paul had previously told them that the Day of the Lord would come suddenly and without warning just as a thief comes in the night. However, the Day of the Lord shall not befall the believer, but the reprobate unbeliever. Because of the spiritual darkness in which the reprobate live, they will not see the Day of the Lord coming. Just when they think they can safely continue on in their sinful life-style in com-

plete peace of mind without fear of judgment, they will suddenly face total destruction as the Day of the Lord dawns. As the prophet Amos said in his day regarding those who strangely said they desired to see the Day of the Lord come:

> **"[18]Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. [19]As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. [20]*Shall* not the day of the LORD *be* darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it"** (Am. 5:18-20)**?**

As for the reprobate, who lives in spiritual darkness, the Lord Jesus' sudden appearance in the bright clouds of Heaven (cf. Mt. 24:29,30) will come upon them very abruptly as a thief breaking into their lives while they are cloaked in the very darkness they thought had protected them. In that bright light of Christ's return, their sins will be fully exposed, and they will no longer have any place to hide. There will be no escape possible, for at every turn of their way, judgment awaits them. The terrible travail they must then face will be as severe as are birth pains to a woman about to deliver her child; but, unlike the woman who eventually delivers her child in great joy, they shall have no means of release or escape from their pain or of their continuing terror.

The Elect Can Discern the Times

> "[4]**But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. [5]Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness"** (1Th 5:4,5).

Here Paul addresses the irrationality of the Thessalonian Church's concern. As brethren who are in Christ, they could not have entered the Day of the Lord unaware, and he assures them that their current fear of having done so is totally unfounded. For they are not living in darkness,

as does the reprobate, but they have been enlightened such that the Day of the Lord could not have surreptitiously come upon them. They are not creatures of darkness, but live and work in the light of the day and have the ability to perceive all that is occurring about them.

Even so, Paul warns that they must remain wide awake and sober of thought, lest they too should become unaware as one who is asleep:

> **"[6]Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober. [7]For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night"** (1Th.5:6,7).

Paul is not speaking of restful sleep to restore strength here, but is speaking of those who are awake in the natural sense yet are asleep to all the things of eternal consequence that are happening all around them. Those that so slumber, walk around with the eyes of their minds closed while the light of prophetic truth is shining all about them. In that sense, they sleep in a spiritual darkness that is as dense as those who are creatures of darkness and whose minds have been dulled by strong drink. As our Lord said,

> **"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh"** (Mt.25:13).

In like manner, the Apostle Paul went on to say to the Thessalonians,

> **"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation"** (1Th.5:8).

As those who walk in the light of Day, Christians must not be frivolous in thought, but sober minded, carefully discerning the times – even as we walk in a dark world – protecting our hearts with faith and love, and steeling our minds with the sure hope of ultimate salvation (cf. Ep. 6:10-18).

The Believer is Not Appointed to God's Wrath

> **"[9]For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, [10]Who died**

> **for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. [11]Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do"** (1Th. 5:9-11).

Paul reassures them that those who are in Christ will not suffer God's fierce wrath when the Day of the Lord comes, whether they are still living or have fallen asleep in death. We have a secure salvation through Jesus Christ who has died for us. For, just before the first trumpet sounds signaling the beginning of the Day of the Lord, all believers in Jesus Christ, whether awake (remaining alive upon the earth) or asleep (having died in Him), shall be removed from the earth to forever live together with Him in Heaven. Therefore, the Day of the Lord cannot begin until the Rapture of the Church has taken place.

The Problematic Immanency Doctrine

Dispensationalists who insist that Christ will "secretly" call down for his Church to leave the earth prior to the coming of the Antichrist to power, speak often and dogmatically of the "imminent coming of Jesus Christ."[513] The word "imminent," like the word "rapture," is not a word translated from Scripture, but is derived from the Latin word *impendēre,* which means "impending or about to occur at any moment." Certainly, the Rapture is pending, inasmuch as it will be the next major event in which God will break through into the affairs of man in a direct and visible way. Nevertheless, that does not preclude a vast period of time existing between the ascension of Christ and his return for the Church –

[513]There are indications that belief in an imminent return of Christ was held by various early post-apostolic Fathers, such as Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch as is evidenced within their writings. This same doctrine was also expressed within various other non-canonical writings such as *The Didache*, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, and *The Shepherd of Hermas.* It must be noted, however, that Post-millennialism was the prevailing eschatological doctrine in those early days which effectively denied a Rapture. Hence, the modern Premillennial Immanency Doctrine is primarily derived from John Darby's assertion of a "secret Rapture" – an event that is not recorded anywhere within the text of the Revelation (cf. The "Secret" Rapture of the Church, page 471).

during which many significant developments will come to pass through human and even satanic agency. That period is now already nearly two-thousand years long.

Jesus spoke of his future return to earth as being extremely quick, sudden, and unexpected, not that it was to occur immediately after nor within a short span of time following his ascension. The present-day "immanency doctrine" is essentially a view that is similar to that which some of the first-century saints held, inasmuch as today we still hear of some speaking of the "soon coming of Christ." The Thessalonians had falsely assumed this "soon coming" from the Apostle Paul's words found in 1Th. 4:13 thru 5:11, which has been discussed above. That false impression obligated Paul to correct this notion in his second epistle that was later sent to them:

> **"[1]Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and** *by* **our gathering together unto him, [2]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. [3]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; [4]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, shewing himself that he is God"** (2Th2:1-4).

In verse 1 of Chapter 2, we find that Paul is speaking of the Rapture with the words "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." In verse 2 of this text we find the phrase, "Day of Christ," wherein the Greek word translated "Christ" is *Christos*, not *Adoni* that would be properly translated as "Lord." Still, many expositors choose to interpret this phrase as the "Day of the Lord" that begins with the seven trumpet judgments; but as we must note, Paul had earlier used this phrase in the context of a "gathering together" of the faithful

within the Rapture to be with Christ.[514] Just preceding the severe judgments related to the Day of the Lord, Jesus will seal a sanctified remnant of Jews to remain upon the earth as his witness (cf. Re.7:1-8), after which He will immediately call down for his Church to join Him in the air. Once the church is removed, a spiritual darkness will blanket the entire earth. Only then will Jesus begin executing the severe trumpet judgments properly associated with the Day of the Lord.

Therefore, we must conclude that Paul intended the "Day of Christ," as he used it here, to first encompass a period beginning with the Rapture of the Church, which then also includes Christ's fierce trumpet judgments that take place within the Day of the Lord that follows.[515]

Paul emphatically stated here that the day of Christ's return and judgment was not "near at hand" – not imminent – not very soon. Rather, Paul informed the Thessalonians that there must first come a total apostasy, a complete falling away from the Christian faith, and that the "man of sin,"[516] the Antichrist, the "son of perdition"[517] must first come to power and will blasphemously exalt himself as if he were God (cf. Re.13:5-8). Only after this, will Christ return to gather his own together with Him, just before He begins to execute judgment on the ungodly during the great and terrible Day of the Lord that immediately follows the Rapture.

Although an apostasy of the faith in our contemporary churches is well underway world-wide, it is not yet total as this book is being written; and although a movement is well under way to establish a one-world government, the Antichrist has not yet appeared on the scene to rule over it – let alone openly declare himself to be God within the

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[514] This phrase is also found in other texts of the Apostle Paul wherein he is referring to the return of Christ for his Church (cf. 1Co. 1:8; Ph.1:10, 2:16).

[515]cf. Commentary: The Great Day of the Lord is Come on page 209 and the Seven Trumpet Judgments beginning on page 225.

[516]cf. Ez. 28:1-10.

[517]i.e. of the pit of *Hades* or the inferno.

Temple – a Temple that we must note does not yet exist in our present day.[518]

Unintended Consequences of the Immanency Doctrine

Nevertheless, the immanency of Jesus' return, in the sense of its immediacy, still persists as an inviolate doctrine by most Dispensationalists as well as many others in our current age. That dogmatic teaching has often brought forth serious unintended consequences. It can be particularly damaging to the faith of new converts, who are taught this doctrine early in their spiritual growth, inasmuch as they may consider an in-depth study of God's word over many coming years unnecessary.

A long period of unfulfilled expectancy apart from the council of God's Word can lead to a growing impatience, which can undermine their belief in Jesus' return altogether when He does not return within an expected nearby period of time. This growing impatience has led some to search-out and set various dates for Jesus' return in an effort to assuage their anxiety. This impulse to set a date has led many Christians in the past away from the true faith into various radical cults and isms.[519] Jesus has informed us that setting a precise date for his return is not possible:

> **"But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only:** (Mt.24:36).

Not even the angels in Heaven are aware of the "day and hour" of Jesus' return that is solely in the mind of the Father; therefore, it would be highly presumptuous for any mortal to assume to know that date. When Jesus does not appear on the date these have unwisely devised, they are devastated and their already weak faith becomes shipwrecked.

Others may neglect urgent earthly matters and duties, believing that Christ will very soon return to save them from the consequences of their laxity. In mere moments before his ascension, Jesus told his followers to get busy, and to take the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth (cf.

[518] cf. Article: Third Temple of the Last Days, page 516.

[519] cf. *CRC* Book III, pages 372 thru 378.

Ac.1:7,8). Yet, for a time they just stood there staring endearingly into Heaven long after Jesus had disappeared from their sight – until an angel appeared to remind them of their purpose for remaining behind (cf. Ac.1:11). Many today spend far too much of their time looking up for the Rapture and in doing so ignore the important work of the Gospel, which is near at hand and our primary purpose for remaining here upon the earth.

The Watchfulness Doctrine

While the return of Christ will appear to be "imminent" to unbelievers who have no expectation of his return,[520] the believer who is expecting Him will be watching for various events as signs leading up to His return – even while they diligently continue on in their work for the Lord. For that reason, we believe that the "immanency doctrine" is better replaced with a doctrine of prayerful watchfulness for various events and signs leading up to the return of Christ such that, as believers, we are not caught unawares. All the while, we are patiently:

> **"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ** (Tit. 2:13; cf. Mt. 24:30; Re. 19:11-16);

A state of patient watchfulness was clearly what the Lord Jesus taught his disciples within the second part of his Olivet Discourse when He said,

> **"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh"** (Mt.25:13).

There will most certainly be signs that an active believer will recognize as the time of Jesus' return approaches that the slothful unbeliever will miss.[521] Jesus had consistently told his disciples to remain awake

[520]It must be noted those who are not in Christ will be totally blind to all the signs proceeding his return. To them, the return of Christ will be shocking, sudden, and without any advance warning.

[521]This is the warning that the Apostle Paul had given to the Thessalonians concerning the coming of the Day of the Lord as we have already discussed above (cf. 1Th 5:4-7).

and within a state of active prayerful watchfulness for various events leading up to his return so that they would not be caught unawares (cf. Mt.24:42; Mk 13:33-35,37; Lu.21:36). Jesus demonstrated this need for due vigilance to his disciples within a parable, within his Olivet Discourse[522] on the end times, which reads in part as follows:

> **"[32]Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer** *is* **nigh: [33]So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near,** *even* **at the doors"** (Mt.24:32,33).

Jesus had just spoken of those things seen from an earthly perspective in Matthew 24 verses 4 through 28 as preceding the sign of his return in verse 30. Just as we can tell that summer is coming when we see tender leaves appearing on the trees, we will be able to discern from various events when we are approaching the last days of this age. When Jesus' watchful followers see those things of which He spoke earlier just beginning to occur they shall know that the time of his glorious return is very near, and eventually "even at the doors."

> **"Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"** (Mt.24:34).

Here, Jesus is not referring to the first-century generation of believers to whom He was currently speaking. Rather, those events will be fulfilled within the lifespan of a single generation of future believers who will have initially observed them as they were just beginning to take place. In our far-advanced age, that sequence of events could begin at any moment as a preamble to Jesus' return; but again, no one on earth knows the day or the precise hour of his return so as to set a precise date or time.

Invalid Criticisms of the Watchfulness Doctrine

It is often said by those who reject a watchfulness doctrine over the immanency doctrine that the Church should not be looking for the com-

[522]cf. Jesus' Olivet Discourse, page 537.

ing of the Antichrist, but for the coming of the true Christ. Admittedly, our focus must be fully centered upon the return of Jesus Christ, whom we greatly long to see. We most certainly have no desire to see the Antichrist come to power, nor for the terrible persecutions and violence that will characterize his iniquitous reign. Nevertheless, when the man of sin appears upon the scene, we will know that Jesus has broken open the first seal of the seven-sealed book in Heaven.[523] From that action, we shall also know that his call down for the gathering and transport of his Church into Heaven is but some three and one-half years away.

This last statement naturally leads to another criticism of the watchfulness doctrine by some, inasmuch as we will be able to reasonably calculate when Christ's return for his Church can be expected once the Antichrist assumes power. Nevertheless, it will still be impossible for anyone to predict a precise "day and hour" that the Rapture will take place. We will not know of that very moment until the sign of his coming appears in the visible heavens (cf. Mt.24:30), after which we who are his own will soon hear the clarion call of Christ for those who are his true Church, to come up to meet with Him in the air.

Finally, one additional criticism of the watchfulness doctrine is the notion that if we do not consider Jesus' coming to be very soon, we may become lax in our faith and in our obedience and service to Him. This could hardly be so, inasmuch as we each know that even before the Lord returns we could at any moment leave this earth through the portal of death and find our self standing in his very presence. There we will be required to give an account of our activities on his behalf before the judgment seat of Christ.

If we have not been constantly on guard to live an active godly life from moment to moment and have become lax in our duties and faithful service before and at the moment of our death, our deficiency would be an extreme embarrassment to us. Moreover, it could result in eternal consequences. Although we are forever his such that He cannot reject us, we must expect Him to withhold various eternal rewards that could have been ours.

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[523]cf. Re. 6:1,2.

Therefore, we find that criticisms of the watchfulness doctrine that Jesus so clearly taught have no valid basis for those in Christ who work, watch, pray, and with great patience await the sign of his appearing. Even should the Lord Jesus not return in our mortal lifetime, our blessed hope remains strong, vital, and unimpaired. For, we know that whether we remain alive in faith, or will have died in our faith, one day we shall all hear his clarion call to arise and join with Him in the air.

Relative Timing of the Rapture

There is confusion and conflict among some devout Christians regarding the relative timing of the Rapture. This conflict is centered around the precise placement of the Rapture relative to a supposed future seven-year period of great tribulation, which is assumed by most Dispensationalists to correspond to Daniel's entire seventieth week.[524]

While the Rapture of the Church was described by the Apostle Paul in First Thessalonians Chapter 4 verses 13 through 18, there is no indication in Paul's statement regarding when this event will take place; nor is their any specific statement in the Revelation emphatically stating that the "Rapture" is actually taking place – inasmuch as the English word "rapture" is transliterated from a Latin word not a Greek word. Nor do we find the Greek word *harpazo* in the Revelation from which the phrase "caught up" is derived in 1Th. 4:17.

In the following paragraphs we will present four different interpretations regarding the chronological placement of the Rapture, of the Church as well as the possible ramifications for each interpretation upon the Church of the last days.[525] In the first three of those interpre-

[524]cf. The Seventieth Week of Daniel page 530.

[525]It will be noted that we have not included "Post-tribulation" in this list as being a credible position as some have done; for this would mean that the believing Church would need to suffer the full wrath of God being poured out upon the reprobate inhabitants of the earth preceding Christ's return for her. That is clearly indefensible based upon 1Th. 1:10 and Re. 6:17, as we have previously discussed. While "Post-tribulation" could be seen to characterize the belief of Covenantalists, it must be noted that they emphatically deny the existence of this

tations, the Tribulation Period is interpreted in accordance with John Darby's premise that it encompasses the entire seventieth week of Daniel, while in the last interpretation an alternative view is set forth, which we believe is more consistent with a literal chronological teaching of the Olivet Discourse[526] as well as the text of the Revelation.

Pre-tribulation Rapture of the Church

Briefly stated, the Pre-tribulation Rapture of the Church assumes that the Rapture will occur prior to the coming of the Antichrist to power as is described in Revelation Chapter 6. It actually proposes that the Rapture must take place at the end of an unknown span of time existing between the texts of Chapters 3 and 4 of the book of the Revelation. Obviously, no text exists for this "brief span of time" in which to describe this event; thus, it is often referred to as a "secret" or "hidden" Rapture. When combined with an additional assumption that the tribulation period of Matthew 24:21 encompasses the entire seven-year period corresponding to Daniel's seventieth week, it has developed into a widely accepted doctrine known as Pre-tribulationism,[527] which the greater majority of evangelical Dispensationalists have accepted as settled doctrine.

Mid-tribulation Rapture of the Church

A Mid-tribulation Rapture constitutes a modification of the Pre-tribulation position. It is believed that the Rapture of the Church will occur about halfway through a seven-year tribulation period just before the "more devastating" trumpet judgments of the second half of that period come about. The first 3 ½ years are referred to as the "beginning of sorrows" (cf. Mt.24:8), which it is assumed that the Church

final seven-year period altogether; consequently, they must also deny any particular period of tribulation taking place within it. Therefore, Post-tribulation is indefensible as viewed by the Dispensationalist, while it holds no real meaning at all for a strict Covenantalist.

[526]cf. Jesus' Olivet Discourse, page 537.

[527]cf. Article Pretribulationalism on page 471 of this Addendum.

must suffer through, while the last 3 ½ years are considered to be a period of very intense tribulation that will fall only upon the unregenerate inhabitants of earth following the removal of the Church. For that reason, some equate the mid-tribulation Rapture with a Pre-wrath Rapture, which we shall now discuss.

Pre-wrath Rapture of the Church

A Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church was first proposed by a highly respected business man, Robert Van Kampen (1941-2009), in the 1970s. He was a 1960 graduate of *Wheaton College* and was known to be a very strict fundamentalist. He was the writer of two books of interest to this discussion. The first was titled *The Sign,* which was a discourse on the end-times that included his pre-wrath position. The second was more directly titled *The Rapture Question Answered Plain and Simple.*

A more recent and somewhat similar pre-wrath view was widely popularized by Marvin Rosenthal,[528] a Russian born Jew who had converted to Christianity, as was proposed in his book entitled, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church,* published in 1990.[529]

The Pre-wrath position directly refutes the commonly held premise of an unrecorded secret or hidden Rapture supposedly occurring prior to the events of Revelation Chapter 4 and following, as was first proposed by John Darby. There are many evangelicals who now hold the Pre-

[528] Marvin J. Rosenthal (1931-2019) was the editor of the magazine *Israel My Glory* for 16 years. He had been a popular speaker in high demand at various Bible prophecy conferences. In 1987, Rosenthal purchased an undeveloped tract of land in Orlando Florida. In cooperation with *Zions' Hope,* a faith mission whose purpose was to present the Gospel to the Jewish people, it was developed into a Christian theme park named, *Holy Land Experience*. Inasmuch as it was constructed as a model of Jerusalem, it was strongly opposed by the *Jewish Defense League*, who saw it as an overt effort to convert Jews to Christianity. Nevertheless, the park was opened to the public in 2001. It was subsequently sold to the *Trinity Broadcasting Network* in 2007. Although not without conflict with its board of directors over his Pre-wrath position, Rosenthal was for some time thereafter still listed as a speaker and the executive director of *Zion's Hope.*

[529] cf. Bibliography, page 705.

wrath view, although they may interpret its various tenets somewhat differently than did Rosenthal.

The Pre-wrath position has retained one serious flaw in common with that of both the Pre-tribulation and Mid-Tribulation views: it still supports the premise that the Great Tribulation Period spoken of by Jesus within his Olivet Discourse is synonymous with the entire seventieth week of Daniel, during which God's wrath is being unleashed upon mankind from beginning to the end. That would mean that all Christian saints still living on earth in that day would suffer through 3 ½ years of God's wrath. This assumption again becomes indefensible based upon 1Th.1:10 and Re.6:17, as we have previously noted above.

Post-tribulation-Pre-wrath Rapture of the Church

The Post-tribulation-Pre-wrath Rapture of the Church[530] proposed by this author is based upon a strict chronological interpretation of the Revelation as well as the Olivet Discourse,[531] from which we have concluded that the great tribulation does not encompass the entire seven years of Daniel's seventieth week, but instead takes place within a brief period of time near the middle of that seven-year period (cf. article The Great Tribulation Period, page 532).

The Post-tribulation, Pre-wrath position presented here is deeply embedded and exposited throughout the Commentary section of this book beginning with Revelation Chapter 4, on page 176. Nevertheless,

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[530] It must be noted that this title concerning the relative placement of the Rapture is not unique. We discovered while researching and editing this book that a book by that title was published in 1997 by Dr. Roland Rasmussen, then pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Canoga Park, California. Nevertheless, after a cursory reading of his book, we discovered vast differences between his interpretation of end-time events and that which is found within this book. The chronology, details, and conclusions reached are so radically different that the two interpretations cannot be easily compared, nor can they in any way be reconciled one with the other.

[531] cf. Jesus' Olivet Discourse, on page 537.

in the interest of completeness, a brief summary concerning that position is included here:

The Post-tribulation-Pre-wrath placement of the Rapture that was put forth in our Commentary, differs from the Pre-wrath placement mentioned above inasmuch as it redefines the commonly accepted length of the Great Tribulation Period. The Post-tribulation part of this statement is based upon reckoning a much shorter time for the Great Tribulation as a brief but chaotic time that will occur near the middle of Daniel's final seven-year week. The Pre-wrath part of this statement is based upon the belief that Christ's call for his Church will immediately follow that brief period of intense tribulation, and just prior to the Day of the Lord that begins with seven trumpet-judgments being hurled down from the heavens upon the reprobate population remaining upon the earth.

This interpretation does not presume that Jesus' purpose in breaking open the first six seals of the scroll in Heaven is to send forth wrath upon the earth, as must other interpretations, but rather that his intended purpose is to establish his authority as the earth's just owner and rightful King.[532] Hence, when Jesus breaks open the first seal, it is not for the purpose of calling forth the Antichrist. Rather, as we have established, it is Satan who sends forth the Antichrist, the rider of a white horse in an effort to deceptively emulate the coming of the true Christ.[533] This event occurs in response to Christ's initial claim on the earth – a claim that Satan angrily resolves to prevent through the establishment of a fraudulent political Antichrist, to rule over the earth in Jesus' place.

While the aforementioned Pre-wrath position is indefensible, inasmuch as the entire seven-year period is viewed as a time in which God's fierce wrath is being sent down upon the earth through which the Church must need to suffer his angry fury along with the reprobate, in the Post-tribulation-Pre-wrath position, the tribulation period is seen as a brief but very intense period of persecution and suffering in the middle

[532]cf. Commentary, Revelation Chapter 6, page 194.

[533] cf. Re.12:17; 13:1; Commentary, Chapter 13, page 279.

of the Seventieth Week, which is brought about by a tyrannical world dictator who is controlled by Satan, not by God.

The Tribulation of the Church

Admittedly, it is difficult for many Christians, especially devout Dispensationalists, who have been consistently taught otherwise, to accept the premise that the Church, the beloved bride of Christ, will still remain upon the earth during any portion of the despotic rule of the Antichrist. Some western Christians in this age appear to believe that the joyous sanctity of the Church is totally inconsistent with any tribulation or suffering.

That is hardly true, as both history and current conditions demonstrate.[534] Although the true Church will never suffer God's wrath, She has been continuously targeted by Satan from the very moment of her inception, such that She has continually suffered the unrighteous wrath of fallen men whom he controls. Even as Christ suffered many afflictions while upon the earth, the Church, which is his body, must also suffer that which remains behind of his suffering (cf. Col. 1:24); for the followers of Christ are not above their Lord in that respect, but must share in their master's sufferings as they carry their own cross within a perverted world (cf. Mt.10:24; 16:24). Inasmuch as we are careful to do so, we are fellow-partakers of Christ's sufferings that remain in his body, the Church. That suffering and affliction will remain the lot of the Church until Christ returns to "catch her up" to be with Him in the coming Rapture. The long history of the Church on earth clearly bears that out, as we shall now briefly relate in the following paragraphs.

God's Truth has never been popular with the depraved masses of the world, for it directly interferes with their sinful lifestyle. Therefore, the world deeply resents Christianity and detests Christians, whose very

[534]At the time that this book is being written, it has been estimated that some two-hundred and sixty million Christians worldwide are suffering severe persecution to the extent that their very lives are at risk because of their firm stand for Christ. That current persecution cam be expected to greatly increase until Christ returns to Rapture his own.

presence continually confronts them with the fact of their fallen nature. As the Lord Jesus has said,

> **"[18]If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before** *it hated* **you. [19]If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"** (Jn.15:18,19).

Although we are not **of** the world, we must remain **in** the world to witness of the Lord Jesus Christ until the Rapture takes place. Ever since its inception, the Church on earth has undergone many periods of extreme persecution first by the Jews who had rejected Christ as their Messiah, then by Roman Caesars, and then by despotic Popes of the Roman Church.[535] During those times, Christian saints suffered from poverty, starvation, and pain; many also died excruciating deaths as faithful martyrs of the faith.[536] Even in today's world, Christians are increasingly suffering intense persecution and death in defense of the faith – particularly those who reside in communist-controlled and Islamic-dominated nations. As the Apostle Paul stated to churches experiencing affliction in his day,

> **"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"** (2Ti. 3:12).

Here Paul expressly told Timothy that the Church was actually appointed to afflictions, inasmuch as they had chosen to live godly lives in Christ. We must not be swayed away from our convictions of faith by those inevitable afflictions and tribulation:

> **"[3]That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. [4]For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to**

[535]cf. *CRC* Book III, *Pentecost to the Eternal Ages*, Sections on Early and Reformed Church History; Particularly Chapters 17.2 – 18.2.

[536]cf. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, John Foxe, 1563.

pass, and ye know" (1Th.3:3,4).

It is actually through sufferings and tribulation that the Church is being purified of her dross, as the false professor is being cast off, leaving the bride of Christ spotless and without any wrinkle of false doctrine. While in their presence, Jesus had told his disciples of the inevitability of the afflictions they and many of us are now suffering or will soon be suffering. Speaking of his coming departure and the inevitable scattering of the saints Jesus said to his followers,

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

Hence, Christians should not be surprised or dismayed by those afflictions when they come, but must remain unmoved in their resolve – even in the very face of extremely intense persecution. Speaking of the internal peace and cheer that the believer enjoys, even while experiencing painful persecution, the Apostle Peter said,

> **"[12]Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: [13]but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. [14]If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy** *are ye;* **for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified** (1Pe. 4:12-14).

Since Christ is further glorified through our sufferings, never have or could any of these persecutions be interpreted as God's wrath being sent down upon his Church; rather, they are the inevitable consequences of living for Christ in this fallen world that Satan controls.

Therefore, the future period of intense persecution that the Church will yet suffer under the coming Political Antichrist is not at all incompatible with the many previous and more recent persecutions she has already suffered from satanically-controlled madmen, as well as the great

persecutions she has likewise endured that had come about through the satanic edicts of earlier and more contemporary despotic rulers.

In the day in which we presently live, we as believers in Christ already find ourselves experiencing the early winds of a storm of persecution that is rapidly approaching hurricane strength. It will eventually reach its culmination within an intense wall of persecution as the Antichrist comes to power. Having said that, this will be the last such period of persecution the Church must endure as Christ returns for us in the eye of the storm. For, suddenly the great tribulation of those days will be cut short (cf. Mt. 24:21,22) to be immediately followed by a brief period of quiet, as Christ returns to call his Church out of this world to join with Him in the air and be transported into the Heavenlies (cf. 1Th. 4:16,17; Re. 7:9,10). Then, as the eye of the storm quickly passes over, the winds will suddenly reverse in direction and increase with even greater fury as God exacts his righteous vengeance upon a reprobate world. ■

Third Temple of the Last Days

The first Temple on earth was built in Jerusalem by King Solomon (ca. 950 BC) in accordance with King David's designated location and plans. It was a permanent structure that was patterned after the wilderness tabernacle, a tent, which was in turn patterned after the tabernacle in Heaven (cf. Re.11:19; 15:5).

Solomon's Temple was reduced to ruins during a second Babylonian invasion of 586 BC, and Babylon was defeated by Cyrus of Persia in 539 BC. Years later, a small remnant of Jews returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah, and the Temple was rebuilt on its original foundation by Zerubbabel in 515 BC – although it was a very poor replica of Solomon's once magnificent Temple. We still refer to this rebuilt Temple as the First Temple,[537] which over a long period of Jewish apostasy had fallen into total ruin from abject neglect and continual disuse.

Herod the Great,[538] a client king of Rome, undertook to expand and beautify the Temple in 19 BC. Inasmuch as Zerubbabel's Temple was small and had laid in ruins for many decades, it was beyond any hope of renovation on a scale that would have satisfied Herod's grandiose egotism. Hence, Herod built an entirely new structure in its place.[539] For that reason, Herod's Temple is commonly referred to as the Second Temple.[540] This partially-completed Second Temple was the one that was

[537] It must be noted that some commentators refer to Zerubbabel's Temple as the second Temple.

[538]Herod was not actually a great man. He was not an Israelite, but an Edomite, a descendant of Esau. He is referred to as "the great" because he was the most prominent of all the members of the much scandalized family of Herod.

[539]Although Herod's Temple was magnificent in its size, it was empty of the presence of God; for, within the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant should have stood, there was nothing except a slightly raised platform, or perhaps an inferior replica of the Ark, which only served to emphasize the original Ark's absence.

standing in Jesus' day, and it was not fully completed until AD 63 – long after Herod's death in 4 BC.[541]

In AD 70, just seven years after it had been completed, Roman armies laid siege to Jerusalem and Herod's massive second Temple was burned and destroyed to the extent that not one stone was left standing upon another. The stones of the Second Temple were then scattered throughout the city's ruins, and many were later re-purposed by the Romans in an effort to build their colony of *Aelia Capitolina* upon Jerusalem's ruins.

Certainty of the Third Temple

As of the date this book is being written, there is no Temple standing in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, we discover from the text of Scripture that there will be a Temple standing there in the last days prior to the return of Christ (cf. Re.11:1; Commentary page 253). This future Temple is commonly referred to as the Third Temple, inasmuch as the utterly destroyed Temple of Herod was referred to as the Second Temple.

This Third Temple must exist before the coming of Elijah and Moses (i.e. the two witnesses) inasmuch as we read in the Revelation that John was instructed to measure this Temple just prior to his vision of the two witnesses (cf. Re.11:1,3; Commentary page 253). We do not know if it will be built near the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel as a result of a covenant that Israel will have made with the political Antichrist when he comes to power (cf. Da. 9:27), or whether it will have been built earlier just before he arrives on the scene to sanction it.

Regardless of precisely when this future Third Temple will have been built, it's construction will not have been approved by God; for the primary purpose of the earthly Temple was to support a sacrificial system that had pointed to the atoning death of Christ. When the purpose of that

[540] It must be noted that some commentators choose to refer to this Temple as the third Temple (cf. footnote 537 above), thus referring to the coming Third Temple as a fourth Temple.

[541]Herod died in Jericho, from an agonizingly painful, putrefying illness of an unknown origin, possibly a cancer, which was commonly referred to as "Herod's Evil."

blood-ritual was completely and literally fulfilled in the sacrificial death of Christ, the necessary purpose of an earthly Temple came to an end. Continuing on in this ritual practice after Christ's sacrificial death became a blasphemous act, for it defied the complete and final atonement for all sin that is to be found only in the death of the true "Lamb" of God, Jesus Christ.

Location of the Third Temple

Jewish tradition stipulates that a Third Temple must be built upon the very same spot that Solomon's Temple once stood and that no other location is suitable. However, prophetic Scripture tells us that the ground upon which Herod's Temple once stood was scraped so clean of debris by the Romans that it resembled a "plowed field" (cf. Je. 26:18). The Romans were determined that no distasteful trace of what they considered "bloody Judaism" was to remain behind, and they had made a very thorough effort in accomplishing just that.

By the time the Romans had moved on, and it was safe for a Jew to reenter the area, around three centuries had passed. Obviously, there was no Jew still living that had actually observed the Temple's location; therefore, there was no way to accurately determine where it had once stood. At that time, four separate locations were being considered for the actual site; nevertheless, there was no way to verify which if any of them was the correct location since all physical traces of the second Temple complex had disappeared as if it had never existed. What remained to ostensibly identify the area was a large level plateau, which is commonly referred to today by both Jews and Christians as the "Temple Mount."

By the year AD 651, the seven Asian churches mentioned in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 as well as the land of Palestine, which had encompassed the area of the old Jewish homeland including the city of Jerusalem, were submerged under the massive Jihad (holy war) of Islam.[542] During the Christian Crusades[543] that followed, a militant effort

[542]cf. *CRC* Book III, page 180-182.

[543]cf. *CRC* Book III, The Crusades, page 193-196.

was made by the Roman Church to forcibly retake the Holy Lands and seize it away from Islamic desecration. The invaders victoriously entered the Holy Lands and Jerusalem in 1099 AD, wherupon the Muslim crescent was removed from the roof of the Dome of the Rock and replaced with a cross.[544] Accordingly, the exuberant Christian crusaders declared it to be the "house of God."

Not long thereafter, this site was also proclaimed to be the original location of Solomon's Temple by many Jews, effectively putting to an end the earlier controversy regarding its exact location. That assumption has now become an 800-year old tradition among devout Jews who have emphatically designated the plateau previously known to Muslims as the *Haram esh-Sharif,*[545] as the "Temple Mount," and therefore the place where the Third Temple must ultimately be rebuilt. This tradition has now hardened into an unalterable pseudo-reality to the extent that any other location for the construction of the Temple is unthinkable.

Zealous orthodox Jews desperately want to rebuild their Temple on this platform. However, any serious encroachment upon that area by them would most certainly trigger an outright war with all of Islam, for the Islamic Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque currently dominate the "Temple Mount."

Due to the political expediency of the current age the entire platform is firmly under the administrative control of Muslims such that no extensive archaeological excavation is allowed upon the mount. Moreover, any positive evidence of the Temple that could have remained on the mount would have been previously obliterated by devout Muslims over many centuries. Nevertheless, Dr. Asher Kaufman, previously associated with the *Hebrew University of Jerusalem*, was able to conduct a few studies on the Temple Mount that led him to believe that the earlier Temples were once located just north of the current Dome of the Rock. In contrast, architect Tuvia Sagiv presented evidence that the earlier

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[544] Jerusalem was retaken by Muslim Turks in AD 1187.

[545] i.e. "The Noble Sanctuary."

Temples were located southward between the Dome of the Rock and the Al Asqua Mosque. However, academic archaeologist Dan Bahat along with many others are convinced that the earlier Temples were located exactly where the Dome of the Rock currently stands.[546]

Taken together, all of this learned speculation would tend to indicate that the Temple had once stood somewhere upon the "Temple Mount." Nevertheless, there are archaeological sites just south of the Temple Mount platform that may indicate otherwise. One such excavation, within an area known as the *Ofphel*, which is located some 300 yards directly south of the "Temple Mount" within the City of David, has unearthed a ruin that could very well be a small room of the demolished Temple of Solomon where animal sacrifice was once conducted.[547]

If it could be proven that the First and Second Temples were actually located on the *Ofphel*, we may then have cause to wonder what purpose the thirty-four-acre walled-in area that we now call the "Temple Mount" had served.[548] Early Roman garrisons were virtual cities designed for long-term or permanent occupations.[549] Therefore, this area is exactly what one would expect to find as the remains of an occupying Roman Garrison of that era; it could very well have been what was referred to as the *Antonia Fortress* of the first-century Roman occupation.[550]

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[546]cf. *Temple*, Robert Cornuke, Bibliography, page 705.

[547]It should be noted that others believe that these ruins could date back to the time of Melchizedek centuries before Solomon constructed the "First Temple." cf. The Mysterious Order of Melchizedek on page 480.

[548]The Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock were built on this existing platform long after the Roman occupation of the area had ended in the third century.

[549]A Roman legion varied in size from 3000 men in early times to around 5200 men during Rome's imperial period. Additional reinforcements were also sent as necessary in troubled times. Therefore, Roman garrisons, such as the Antonia Fortress needed to contain barracks capable of housing up to 6000 soldiers, as well as providing housing for up to 4000 or so additional support personnel to see to the everyday needs of its military personnel.

[550]The guard tower currently known as the *Antonia Fortress* could not possibly hold a Roman legion, such that it is likely all that remains to identify the platform as an earlier Roman Garrison.

The implication of accepting this area as once having been a Roman garrison is very disturbing and far reaching. It touches upon the faith of the many devout Jews who worship at the "wailing wall," believing it to be the western retaining wall of the Temple complex. In reality, it very well could be but the western wall of an abandoned Roman Military post – a garrison that once housed a legion of soldiers who had slaughtered their brethren and destroyed their beloved Temple! Accepting that inference as historic fact is almost too cruel for us to contemplate, and it is impossible to believe that any devout Jew would ever accept it.

Preparations for the Third Temple

There is presently a movement composed of devout orthodox Jews within Israel that are already planning for the Third Temple's construction. They have made and stored away many implements to furnish the Temple and to provide for the resumption of its sacrificial worship service once it is completed. A priesthood is likewise being trained, and priestly garments are being stored away. All is being made ready, merely awaiting the opportunity to begin construction.

Although accepting a location off of the "Temple Mount" within the old city of David would mean that Israel could rebuild her Temple without going to war with Muslims, Judaism's deeply entrenched traditions will likely overrule any archaeological evidence for any alternate location no matter how well documented it may be.

For that reason, it is all but certain that the Third Temple will one day be built somewhere upon the "Temple Mount." It is quite possible that the powerful world government that makes way for the rise of the Antichrist will have eventually overcome by force or will have somehow mollified Islam's relentless desire for world domination sufficient to allow its construction. However, it is even more likely that the Antichrist, whom Islam will presume to be their long awaited *Mahdi*, will exercise his influence to temporarily appease militant Islam. Should that be the case, the Third Temple will be constructed in accordance with the treaty that the Antichrist will have made with Israel (cf. Da. 9:27).

Resumption of Ritual Animal Sacrifice

It may at first seem strange that the Antichrist would assist Israel in this way, but his intent is to serve Satan's nefarious purpose of discrediting the full and complete atonement for sin only made available through Jesus Christ. He moves to do this by restoring the ritual of animal-sacrifice. The Jew understands from their ancient writings that there is no redemption possible without the shedding of blood, and Jews greatly desire both personal and national redemption. Having rejected their true Messiah and the full and permanent atonement Christ offers, they are desirous to return again to repetitive ritual sacrifice in hopes of achieving a sense of temporal atonement through the blood of animals.

Once the Third Temple is built, it is inevitable that animal sacrifice will once again be practiced by Israel, as they ignorantly attempt to reinstate the ceremonial law. If the Third Temple should be built before the Antichrist comes to power, the secular world would rise up in outrage for what they see as this indiscriminate slaughter of many animals. Moreover, while many Jews say they desire to return to the sacrificial system, it is doubtful that even the most devout Jew of this current age could long endure the blood and gore associated with its reality.

That sanguinary fact may be the very thing that will result in many Jews turning away from Temple worship to accept their true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed once for all. Because so many Jews will be turning to accept Jesus Christ through that means, the Antichrist will order an end to the sacrificial system some three and one-half years into his reign, thus rendering the Temple and its ceremonial practices desolate – even as the abominable image representing the Antichrist is set up within the Holy of Holies of the Third Temple.[551]

[551]cf. Da. 9:27; Mt.24:15,16; Mk. 13:14; Commentary page 290.

Destruction of the Third Temple

The Third Temple that was sanctioned by the Antichrist, is both blasphemous and temporal; therefore, it must be removed before the great Millennial Temple is constructed on earth by Jesus Christ.[552] Although Scripture does not specifically tell us of the Third Temple's destruction, it will most likely come about when a massive earthquake shakes the entire earth from pole to pole, causing a tenth part of Jerusalem to fall – even as every major city of the nations on earth crumbles into rubble (cf. Re. 11:13,14).[553] ■

[552]The Prophet Zechariah spoke of a Fourth Temple that Jesus, the "BRANCH," will build upon his return to the earth (cf. Ze. 6:12,13; Is. 11:1). The Millennial Temple will differ greatly from all previous Temples, for it will act as a memorial to the work and person of Jesus Christ. This Millennial Temple was described in great detail by the Prophet Ezekiel (cf. Ez, 40, 45; Article, The Millennial Temple on page 636).

[553]This massive earthquake will come about just before the seventh trumpet sounds.

Daniel's Prophecy of Seventy Weeks

In this Article we shall focus our attention upon that portion of a prophecy found within the book of Daniel that tells of a seven-year period in the latter days, which ultimately leads to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to establish his Millennial Kingdom upon the earth. Before delving into this very complex text, we shall first provide a little historical background concerning Daniel and the times in which he prophesied:

By the turn of the seventh century BC, Israel had become a divided nation. The ten apostate tribes comprising the northern kingdom had already gone into Assyrian captivity in 722 BC; thus leaving the southern kingdom of Judah, which also included the smaller half-tribe of Benjamin, relatively untouched by the Assyrian military operation.

However, Judah was to encounter an even more formidable foe as Babylon rose up in great might to become a world power. Judah was already in a deep spiritual and political decline when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, first came against the city of Jerusalem in about 606 BC and then captured it in 604. Although he did not destroy Jerusalem until around 587 BC, he had robbed the Temple of many of its precious implements, and he had also carried away captive many of Judah's inhabitants to serve as slaves in Babylon.

Within that first group of captives was an intelligent young man of about seventeen whose name was Daniel. Daniel was a very devout Jew, and a man of intense prayer. While in Babylonian captivity, God shared many things concerning the future with him, which he recorded in a document that we now refer to as the Book of Daniel.

The first portion of the Book of Daniel is historical, while the second half beginning with Chapter 7 is prophetic. Near the end of the historic section, Daniel tells of the fall of Babylon to Darius the Median (cf. Da. 5:31). who was later succeeded by Cyrus the Persian (cf. Da. 6:28).

Beginning in Chapter 7 of the prophetic section we see a vision of the Ancient of Days, and the emergence of the Son of Man who will be given eternal dominion over all people, nations, and languages within an everlasting Kingdom that cannot be destroyed (cf. Da. 7:13,14). In Chapter 8 we find a prophecy of the rise to power of Antiochus Epiphanes the king of Syria, who captured Jerusalem in 167 BC and desecrated the Temple by offering up a pig within it on an altar to Zeus. Antiochus is commonly viewed as a type of the Antichrist of the last days who will place a similar abomination in the Third Temple[554] that will render it completely desolate.[555]

With that background information by way of an introduction, we shall now begin an exposition of Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks which is found in Chapter 9. We have represented that seventy weeks by a time-line shown below in Illustration 7.

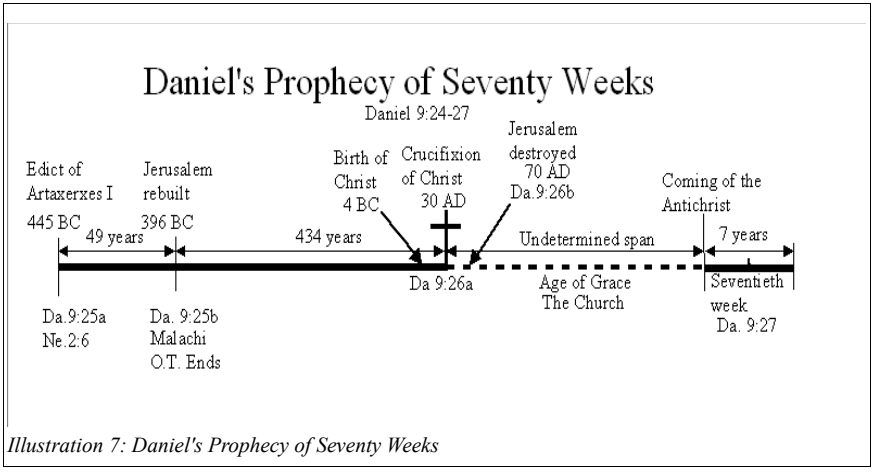

Illustration 7: Daniel's Prophecy of Seventy Weeks

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to

[554]cf. Article Third Temple of the Last Days on page 516.

[555]cf. Commentary, The Abomination of Desolation page 290.

> **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"** (Da. 9:24).

To properly interpret this verse, we first need to understand the concept of a Sabbatical-year, (i.e. *Shmita*) as it is recorded in the book of Leviticus:

> **"[3]Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; [4]But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. [5]That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land"** (Le. 25:3,5).

Every seventh year the Israelite was required by God to leave their land fallow; they were not to sow or cultivate their fields, nor could they prune their vineyards. They and their livestock were to survive during that year by having stored up a portion of the harvests obtained from the previous six years. This seven-year period constituted a Sabbatical-year:

> "**And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years"** (Le.25:8; cf. De. 15:1-14).

Therefore, verse 9:24 of Daniel's prophecy predicts a seventy-year period of captivity for the southern kingdom of Judah in Babylon – each year of which corresponded to a sabbatical year that Israel had previously transgressed over a period of 490 (70×7) years by not allowing the land to rest as God had commanded. In the Chronicles of the Jews we read that the purpose of the Babylonian captivity was:

> "**To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths:** *for* **as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years**" (2Ch.36:21; cf. Je.25:11).

Thus, we find that each of the 70 weeks in Daniel's prophecy represents a week of years (i.e. seven years), based upon the seven-year frequency of a Sabbatical-year. This "week of years" principle is instrumental in understanding the chronology of Daniel's prophecy, which we shall now begin to examine in some detail.

The First Temple to be Rebuilt

Referring again to Illustration 7 on page 525, the prophetic aspect of Daniel's 70 weeks can be seen to represent a total of 490 years (i.e. 70 x 7), which began with an edict of Artaxerxes I, (i.e. Cyrus, king of Persia), issued around 445 B.C that authorized the release of captive Jews to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem. As we read in the chronicles of the Jews,

> **22"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD** *spoken* **by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and** *put it* **also in writing, saying, 23Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which** *is* **in Judah. Who** *is there* **among you of all his people? The LORD his God** *be* **with him, and let him go up"** (2Ch. 36:22,23).

As we find on the left side of the time-line in the illustration above, 49 years (7 X 7) were required to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem by the returning exiles. Detailed accounts regarding

the edict of Artaxerxes, the return of a remnant of Jews to their land, the completion of the Temple, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem in 396 BC are recorded in the Old-Testament books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Messiah to be Cut Off

It is at this point in his prophecy that Daniel begins to speak of a future time in which the long-expected Messiah will appear upon the earth:

> [25] **"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.** [26]**And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself:"** (Da. 9:25, 26a).

Referring again to Illustration 7 on page 525, we find that the end of the next 434 years (62 X 7), which followed the rebuilding of Jerusalem, closely coincides with the date of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in AD 30. Jesus, the Messiah, was indeed "cut off" from the land of the living by means of a cruel Roman crucifixion:

> **"By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who** *among them* **considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke** ***was due"*** (Is. 53:8)?

He was not "cut off" for any fault found within Himself, but for the sins of his people. Because of their rejection of Him, the Messiah was also cut off from the nation of Israel.

For a brief interval of one generation (about 40 years) following the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Jews continued to worship in the Temple by offering up animal sacrifices that no longer had any

purpose or meaning. This also included a number of professing Hebrew Christians who were neglecting the regular assembling of themselves together to worship Christ. The writer to the Hebrews had severely admonished them for this grievous error. Inasmuch as Christ had offered up Himself once for all sins (cf. He.10:10), He had completely fulfilled the intent and purpose of the ceremonial law of animal sacrifice that had earlier pointed to Him. Therefore, to believe that it was necessary to offer up the blood of animals for the forgiveness of sins in addition to the precious blood of Christ was blasphemous.

Destruction of the Second Temple

> **"...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"** (Da. 9:26b).

The first reference[556] of a coming "prince of the people" in Daniel's prophecy refers to Titus, and his people were the Romans who destroyed the city and the sanctuary in the first century. Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus (AD 40-81), the ruthless son of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, was placed in charge of the military operation against the Jews in Judaea in AD 69.

In AD 70, Jerusalem fell to his armies after a prolonged siege. Titus' treatment of the surviving Jews was terribly brutal. Moreover, he oversaw the demolition of the Great Herodian Temple of Jerusalem by his soldiers; such that not one stone remained upon another (cf. Mt.24:2).[557]

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[556] The prophets of old often spoke of an earlier event that pointed to a later or final event. The earlier prophetic event is referred to as the first reference, and the final prophetic event as the second reference. As the first event comes to pass and is fulfilled, it serves to authenticate the certainty of the fulfillment of the second prophetic event in a similar manner. If however the first event did not come to pass, they were considered to be false prophets and their word was forever discredited concerning any future events.

[557] A portion of the western wall outside the "Temple Mount" remains standing today and is known as the "Wailing Wall." It has become a religious artifact where prayers are offered up by

As a consequence of the destruction of the Temple, the sacrificial system was thereby forcibly discontinued, and the city of Jerusalem was laid desolate.

The Seventieth Week of Daniel

The earlier portion of Daniel's prophecy concerning Israel has been completely fulfilled within our present-day history. However, it can be clearly seen that only 69 of the 70 weeks for a total of 483 years of the prophecy have been accounted for at this current time.

As the Messiah (i.e. Jesus Christ) was cut off from the earth through his crucifixion we observe an obvious break in the flow of Daniel's prophecy that takes place between verse 26 and verse 27 in which the second reference[558] of Daniel's prophetic text then becomes evident. This break is indicated above in Illustration 7 by a dashed line representing a period of undetermined length, which corresponds to the age of grace – the Church age – in which we currently live.

That age is now nearly two thousand years in length, and it is something that the Jew of Daniel's day could not possibly have foreseen or understood. For that reason, God ordered Daniel to seal up this long-range aspect of his prophecy until the end times when men would be supplied with increased knowledge to comprehend it. (cf. Da. 9:24; 12:4).

This final week is mentioned in verse 27 in connection with a "prince that shall come" (cf. Illustration 8 below).

Jewish residents of the city, believing it to be the western wall of the ancient Temple complex (cf. Location of the Third Temple, page 518).

[558]cf. footnote 556. Whereas Daniel's first reference of the "prince of the people" referred to Titus, the second reference refers to the coming Antichrist who will likewise render the Third Temple of the Jews desolate.

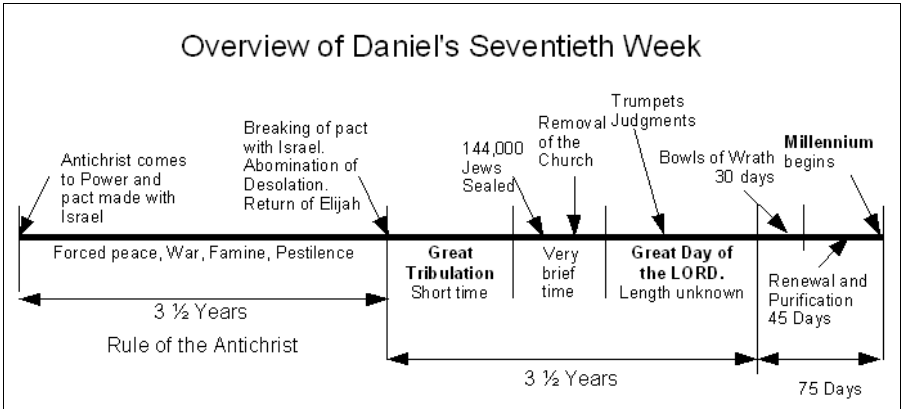

Illustration 8: The Seventieth Week of Daniel

> **"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"** (Da.9:27).

From the greater perspective we as Christians have attained from events recorded in the New Testament, both before and after the cross of Christ, we understand that "the prince that shall come," which initially referred to Titus, also referred to a future satanically-controlled ruler who is mentioned throughout the New Testament as the Antichrist or the "man of sin" (cf. 2Th.2:3).

When he comes to power, the Antichrist will make a pact of peace with Israel for one week – that is, for seven years. This seven-year period shown at the right end of the time-line in Illustration 7 on page 525, is represented by an expanded time-line in Illustration 8 shown above on page 531. It begins as the Antichrist comes to power upon the earth. Just before, or very early during that seven-year period, Israel will build

a Third Temple[559] at Jerusalem and will erroneously resume the blood rituals that were practiced under the old sacrificial system. In the middle of that seven-year period the Antichrist will abruptly order all offerings and animal sacrifices to cease – even as he further violates his pact with Israel by desecrating the Temple with a technically enhanced idol that is referred to in Scripture as the Abomination of Desolation (cf. Mt.24:15; Da.12:11; Commentary page 290).

The Great Tribulation Period

This brings us to the mid-point of Daniels seventieth week. In the expanded time-line of Illustration 8 above, we show the "Great Tribulation" as being a "short time." This corresponds with a chronological interpretation of the text found in Jesus' Olivet Discourse, as it is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew.[560] Relevant excerpts of that discourse are included here as they relate to the current discussion of Daniel's prophecy:

> **"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)"** (Mt. 24:15).

Here we find that the atrocious idol of the Antichrist will have been placed directly within the Holy of Holies of the Third Temple. The meaning behind the precise placement of this idol within the holy place will not be lost upon the Jews who find themselves in a state of absolute shock, fear, and dismay. Thus, the following Verses of this discourse describes an extremely hasty departure of Jews from Judaea into the mountainous areas about in order to escape Jerusalem and the demented evil of the Antichrist:

> **"[16]Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: [17]Let him which is on the housetop not**

[559] cf. Article Third Temple of the Last Days, page 516.

[560] cf. Article Jesus' Olivet Discourse, page 537.

> **come down to take any thing out of his house: [18]Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. [19]And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! [20]But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day"** (Mt. 24:16-20):

In their great haste to escape, they can carry nothing with them except the clothes on their back. This sudden exodus will be especially difficult for pregnant women and those who have young children. If this mass exodus should occur in the winter months, it is certain that they all would be impeded by heavy rain and storms. Moreover, the observance of a sabbath day, in which they cannot legally travel, will further impede them. This journey will be particularly sorrowful and filled with anguish for those Jews who had erroneously accepted the Antichrist as their Messiah – until he had placed his abominable idol in the Holy place of the Third Temple, thus desecrating it and rendering it inhospitable for any Jew.

> **[21]"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. [22]And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened"** (Mt.24:21,22).

We find that Jesus specifically refers to this period of great tribulation as an interval of time immediately following the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation by the Antichrist within the Third Temple – an event that we and most sound Bible expositors universally agree occurs 3 1/2 years into Daniel's seven-year period (cf. Da.12:11). Those terrifying days of absolute chaos shall be shortened for the sake of God's elect Jews – lest they too should perish along with the reprobate of that day.

Immediately following this period of Great Tribulation, is a very brief interval of quiet, represented above on the time-line of Illustra-

tion 8, within which 144,000 elect Jews will be sealed to witness of Christ during the great "Day of the Lord," which is imminently pending.[561]

Although Jesus does not mention the Rapture within the Jewish context of his Olivet Discourse, it will be noted that we have placed the Rapture of the Church within this same brief interval just following the sealing of the Jewish remnant. This placement corresponds to the chronology of those events as they are recorded within the book of the Revelation – wherein the Apostle John saw a great Gentile multitude suddenly appear before him in Heaven (cf. Re.7:9-17; Commentary page 215).

Immediately following the Rapture of the Church, we find the period referred to as the "Day of the Lord," will begin as Jesus breaks open the seventh seal of the great scroll in Heaven. During that period, seven angels will sound seven trumpets signaling seven severe judgments that will come forth upon the earth. (cf. Re. 8: 6; Commentary page 227). This period of trumpet judgments marks the conclusion of Daniel's prophecy concerning the seventieth week.

The Final Seventy-five Days

However, Daniel also prophesied regarding seventy-five additional days that would immediately follow the seventieth week, which is shown at the right end of the timeline of Illustration 8 on page 531. As we observe, this seventy-five days is divided into a thirty day period that is immediately followed by a forty-five day period. This seventy-five days has been expanded in Illustration 9 below to illustrate those two periods in greater detail.

[561]The "Day of the Lord" has been fully described beginning in Revelation Chapter 7 verse 4. (cf. Commentary page 212).

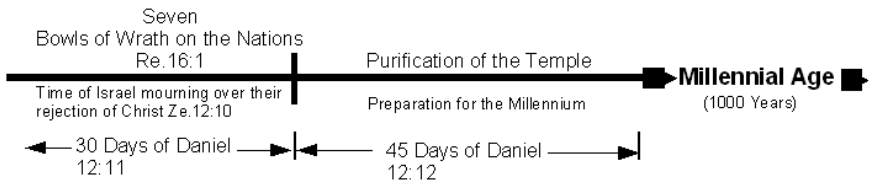

Illustration 9: Seventy-five Days following the Seventieth Week

The Day of God's Wrath

> **"And from the time** *that* **the daily** *sacrifice* **shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up,** *there shall be* **a thousand two hundred and ninety days** (Da. 12:11).

As we have observed, the Abomination of Desolation (cf. Mt.24:15; Da.9:27) will have been set up in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week, thus leaving 3 ½ years or 1260 days to its end.[562] Here, however, the text refers to 1290 days, which indicates that a period of 30 days (1290-1260=30) has been appended to Daniel's week. As is shown in Illustration 8, we have interpreted that it is within this thirty-day period that God will vent his final wrath upon the reprobate population of the earth through seven bowl judgments administered by seven angels (cf. Re.16:1-21; Commentary page 317).

The Earth Renewed for the Coming Millennial Age

> **"Blessed** *is* **he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days"** (Da.12:12).

As we observe in this verse, a second period of forty-five days is indicated following the earlier thirty-day period (1335-1290=45). The seven bowl judgments that had occurred within the earlier thirty-day period

[562] 1260 days are based upon 30-day months or 360 day years. Therefore, 360 days x 3 ½ years =1260 days.

will have rendered the earth desolate and uninhabitable. However, in this next forty-five days Christ will renovate, reconfigure and cleanse the earth, and He will purify a newly constructed Temple[563] thus making everything ready as the earth enters into the Millennial Age.[564] Those Jews, who will have endured to the end[565] and have waited until this time, are greatly blessed for they will then enter into the glorious Millennial Kingdom. ■

[563]Inasmuch as the Third Temple was not sanctioned by God, it would seem proper to refer to the Millennial temple as the true Third Temple.

[564] cf. Article The Millennial Age on Earth on page 614.

[565]These Jews will be the 144,000 that had been sealed (cf Commentary page 212) along with a multitude of additional Jews who had been reclaimed by Christ for this day through their continuing ministry throughout the Day of the Lord (cf. Commentary page 209).

Jesus' Olivet Discourse

In this Article, we turn to the spoken words of Jesus Christ as they are recorded within his Olivet Discourse. It has been so named because He engaged in this discussion with his Apostles while they were gathered together upon the Mount of Olives. This extensive discourse concerning the last days is found in Matthew Chapters 24 through 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Inasmuch as Matthew provides the more extensive account of this discourse, we shall focus our exposition on that text, while supplementing it at times with additional text taken from the synoptic gospels of Mark and Luke.[566]

Matthew's extended account of this discourse can be divided into three parts as follows:

1. Major events leading up to the end of the current age, which contains an all-important text paralleling the seventieth week of Daniel.[567] – recorded in Chapter 24, verses 4 thru 44.
2. Activities, moral responsibilities, and living status of those on earth in the interval of time prior to Jesus' return – recorded in Chapter 25, verses 1 thru 30.
3. The ultimate judgment of Gentile nations based upon their earlier treatment of God's people during that same interval – recorded in Chapter 25, verses 31 thru 46.

At the time the Olivet Discourse took place, Jesus' Apostles were expecting an imminent establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth. They as yet knew nothing of a vast intervening New-Covenant Church era, for that covenant was yet to be written in Jesus' blood. There are only two mentions of a "church" by that name within the four Gospels and both are found in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. Mt.16:18; 18:17). In those two instances, the underlying Greek word, *ekklesia,* could be defined as any "religious assembly or congregation." Although

[566] This Article contains a considerable amount of edited text taken from two Newsletter Articles published in January and February of 2017.

[567] cf. Daniel's Prophecy of Seventy Weeks on page 530.

we who are now living within that era clearly understand that Jesus was referring to the New-Testament Church, largely consisting of Gentile believers that would dominate this present interim age, his Apostles likely understood *ekklesia* as a Jewish assembly that would go directly into the Kingdom age.

Therefore, as we consider the questions that the four apostles had asked and the answers that Jesus gave them in response, we must realize that his words were specifically tailored to inform them as Jews who were inquiring about the end of their current age and the establishment of the long-awaited Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth.

The Lord Jesus had previously delivered a full declaration, a manifesto, of his coming Kingdom to the Jews, commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount, which is recorded in Matthew Chapters 5 through 7.[568] Although Jews were amazed with the power and authority of Jesus' words and were also the benefactors of his many miracles, his claim to deity as the Son of God was consistently being denied on the basis of their strict monotheistic belief (cf. De. 6:4).

Some believed that Jesus was but the son of a common carpenter (cf. Mt.13:55), while still others saw Him as a personification of John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or some other prophet of old (cf. Mt.16:13,14). This confusion regarding Jesus' person abounded even as an irrational hatred of Jesus continued to grow among Israel's religious rulers. The Pharisees, who could not deny the authenticity of his many miracles, (cf. Jn.3:2) often attributed them to the power of Satan (cf. Mt.12:24). At one point, even Jesus' own family members, having become concerned for his sanity and personal safety, had sought to intervene in his ministry (cf. Mt.12:46).

Finally, Jesus brought all of this built-up animosity of the religious establishment to a climax when He leveled seven charges against the Scribes and Pharisees, wherein He repeatedly referred to them as fools, blind guides, and hypocrites (cf. Mt.23:13-35). He then concluded his scathing rebuke with an emphatic statement concerning their coming judgment:

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[568]cf. Newsletter Article March 2014.

> **"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate"** (Mt. 23:38).

In context, the Scribes and Pharisees' "house" must be interpreted as their religious office and jurisdiction – and more specifically as it pertained to the Temple complex. The word "desolate" can best be interpreted as a forlorn, uninhabited, and worthless wasteland.[569] At this point, any hope that Jesus' Apostles may have harbored for some reasonable acceptance by Israel's religious leaders was completely dashed. Much of what the Apostles had heard Jesus say to the Scribes and Pharisees was very hard for them to accept – for it ended all future communication with them and eliminated all hope of any peaceful accommodation.[570]

After having passed judgment on the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus had expressly said to them,

> **"For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed** *is* **he that cometh in the name of the Lord"** (Mt. 23:39; cf. Lu. 13:35).

Those words would have been processed by his disciples in the immediate context to mean that Jesus was planning to abandon Jerusalem at that time without having established his Kingdom, but that He could soon return in the unlikely event that Israel's obstinate religious rulers would repent and would thus receive Him as their Messiah.

> **"[1]And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to** *him* **for to show him the buildings of the temple. [2]And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down"** (Mt.24:1,2).

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[569]"Desolate" aptly described the barren ground upon which the Temple had once stood after its total destruction by Roman armies in AD 70.

[570]As for the Jewish leaders, this final invective that they had heard from Jesus against them was received as blasphemy; soon thereafter their hatred would cause them to diligently seek an opportunity to kill Him. (cf. Mt. 26:3,4).

As they left the Temple area, many of the disciples had sought to show Jesus the massive construction of the Temple complex, which He had just declared would soon become desolate – a barren uninhabitable wasteland. This emphatic statement coming forth from Jesus that one stone would not be left standing upon another must have been a terrible shock to his disciples, considering that many of the massive stones making up the Temple were as much as 24 feet long and weighed many tons. Moreover, they could not even imagine how the Kingdom of Heaven could come into existence on earth without its central Temple. Hopelessly confused, four of the apostles decided to ask Jesus two questions, in hopes of allaying at least some of their anxiety.

The Apostles Two Questions

Later, as Jesus sat with his disciples on the Mount of Olives, Peter, James, John, and Andrew (cf. Mk.13:3), asked Him about the harsh statements that He had made to the Scribes and Pharisees, which were so troubling to all of them:

> **"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what** *shall be* **the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world"** (Mt. 24:3)?

We must understand that the Apostles' questions were asked within the context of their limited understanding of things that they had been previously taught by Jesus and the events of his ministry that they had personally witnessed. Although Jesus had repeatedly told them that He must suffer death at the hands of the religious authorities and would rise again on the third day (cf. Mt.16:21; 17:22,23; 20:18,19), they were mentally incapable of accepting that statement as fact; at one point Peter had actually rebuked Jesus for saying such an unthinkable thing (Mt.16:22). They consistently believed that Jesus would set up his Kingdom on earth within their immediate lifetimes.

Let us now delve into the text of the Olivet discourse in which Jesus explained future things to his apostles in some detail in an effort to allay some of their confusion.

First Question: "When Shall these Things Be"

We begin with the apostle's first question: "when shall these things be?" In context, this question must be interpreted as to mean when the massive Herodian Temple would be destroyed. For, Jesus had just told the Scribes and Pharisees that condemnation would come upon them within their own generation for the way that Israel had abused and killed the prophets of old, which God had sent to warn them of coming judgment (cf. Mt.23:33-36).[571]

Destruction of the Second Temple

It is significant to note that Matthew did not choose to record Jesus' answer to this first question concerning the destruction of the Temple, choosing instead to move on to the second question regarding the time of the Lord Jesus' return to the earth and the end of the age.

Nevertheless, Luke did record Jesus' answer to the Apostles' question concerning the desolation of the Temple in his Gospel account. Therefore, we shall now turn to that text which reads as follows:

> **"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh"** (Lu. 21:20).

This verse speaks of the early beginnings of the preparations for the Roman siege of Jerusalem as it was slowly being surrounded by the armies of Titus in AD 69.

Mass Dispersion of Jews out of Jerusalem

Thus, Jesus' next words instructed its inhabitants to flee not only the city of Jerusalem but to vacate all of Judaea and to hide themselves deep

[571] At that time a generation was commonly understood to be approximately 35-40 years.

in the surrounding mountain regions to escape the "days of vengeance" that were soon coming.

> **"[21]Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. [22]For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled"** (Lu. 21:21,22).

Jews who were living in the surrounding environs were warned by Jesus not to enter Judaea, for these are the days of God's vengeance that must be fulfilled. For those who did not heed this early warning to flee, but had chosen to stay behind in Jerusalem, the days ahead would be most dreadful as the Roman armies ultimately besieged the city:

> **"But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people"** (Lu.21:23).

The ancient historian, Josephus, tells of the terrible famine within the city that had finally become so devastating that infants were sorely neglected, and their dead bodies were sought after for food – often even by their own mothers.

Jesus speaks of those who would attempt to break through the siege and those who remained within the city when the Romans breached its walls with these words:

> **"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"** (Lu.21:24).

Again, Josephus tells of this massive slaughter in gruesome detail. Many crosses appeared upon the hillsides on which the more arrogant of the Jews were summarily crucified. Josephus also tells of many captives that were led away to Rome to serve harsh masters there or to be sold as

slaves in more distant nations. At that time, Jerusalem had become trodden down by the Romans, and Gentiles still occupy large portions of Jerusalem within today's politically restored Israel; for, the times of the Gentile occupation has not yet been fulfilled.

Jesus Defers Answering the first half of the Disciples' Second Question

The Apostles second question had two parts; the first regarding the sign of Jesus' return to Jerusalem,[572] and the second concerning the end of the current age. We find that Jesus chose to defer answering the question concerning the sign of his coming until later on in his discourse,[573] for it was important for them to understand that his return would not be soon; it would in fact occur in the distant future far beyond their mortal lifetimes.

False Messiahs will Deceive Many

Therefore, Jesus chose to give them a stern and very necessary warning concerning many impostors that would come forth claiming to be the Christ during the prolonged period preceding his return:

> **"[4]And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. [5]For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many"** (Mt.24:4,5).

History records that many have falsely claimed to be the Messiah (the Christ) over the many centuries since Jesus' ascension, and that they have fooled many by their lies and deception. Nevertheless an ultimate deceiver, the Antichrist, will come forth in the last days working many lying signs and wonders (cf. 2Th.2:9). This future Antichrist will be a

[572]We take note that the apostles avoided asking Him how or where He was going, but instead sought to know what sign would signal his promised return to Jerusalem.

[573]cf. The Sign of Jesus' Return, page 549.

counterfeit Messiah who will successfully deceive the entire world through the power of Satan.[574]

The End of the Age

The second half of the Apostles' second question concerned when they could expect the end of the age to come about (cf. Mt.24:3). It is most unfortunate that the *Authorized King James Version* of the Bible translates the Greek word *aion* in the text of Matthew 24:3 above as "world," which would imply an end to all human existence; *aion* only specifies a precise period of time or a specific "age." Therefore the apostles understood *aion* as the end of their current age, which they also understood was to be immediately followed by the promised Kingdom age on earth.

Inasmuch as the Lord Jesus' return will closely coincide with "the end of the age," He combined the first and second half of his Apostles' second question into a single discourse in which He first addressed events leading to the end of the age, and concluded with a statement concerning the sign of his coming.

Rumblings of Regional Wars

Jesus began to answer the Apostles second question as He spoke of wars and threats of wars that would take place during his prolonged absence:

> "**And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all** *these things* **must come to pass, but the end is not yet"** (Mt.24:6).

This answer implies a broad expanse of time that must take place before He returns. While wars and threats of wars can be seen to have plagued mankind throughout history and the end of the age had not yet come, certainly, many wars and rumors of wars can be seen to characterize the current age in which we live. Many Bible expositors believe that

[574]cf. The First Beast – the Political Antichrist, Commentary, page 279.

wars and rumors of wars will increase in intensity and frequency as we continue to approach the end of this current age.

The Great World War

In the very next verse, Jesus begins to describe a large-scale global war and its terrible aftermath that will occur just prior to the end of this age:

> **"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places"** (Mt. 24:7).

The word "nation" found here is *ethnos* in the Greek, which means an ethnic race or tribe. The word "rise" is *egeirō* in the Greek, which means to "awake," to "take up" arms. By implication, these are pagan Gentile kingdoms that are divided by ethnicity within opposing realms or regions (Greek, *basileia*) that engage each other in an intense global war (cf. Re. 6:4).

Famine and pestilence commonly follow war during which crops are destroyed and food delivery chains are disrupted (cf. Re. 6:5,6). The earthquakes mentioned may be God-sent, or it may be that massive explosions resulting from advanced weaponry have triggered earthquakes in various places. Regardless of the cause, earthquakes will greatly add to the terrible destruction.

It is easily demonstrated that those events characterize the end of the first half of Daniel's seventieth week[575] as the global dictatorship of the Political Antichrist all but collapses – leading to a great world war that is followed by famine, and pestilence (cf. Commentary page 198). Throughout that first 3½ years of this seven-year period, afflictions and religious persecutions will be very common. Jesus said concerning those persecutions that "all these are the beginning of sorrows" – or but the beginnings of a "great travail" (cf. Mt.24:8).

[575]cf. The Seventieth Week of Daniel, page 530.

Mass Persecution of Jews

At this mid-point of the seven-year period, 144,000 Jews will be sealed to witness of Christ (cf. Re.7:4). However there will be many unsealed Jews in addition to the 144,000 remaining in that day who through the grace of God acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, and for their firm stand they will be heavily persecuted. Jesus specifically spoke of the persecution of believing Jews in that day when He said,

> **"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake"** (Mt.24:9).

The Gentile nations of the world will deliver them up to be afflicted and to be killed. The Jews identified in this verse are those who have accepted Jesus as their Messiah. They are hated by all nations not only for being Jews, but for carrying within them a personal identity with Jesus Christ, and for living their lives as is required of those who are his namesake.

> **"And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another"** (Mt.24:10).

This speaks of Jew-on-Jew persecution as many false prophets arise in their midst to assist the persecutors, such that many Jews will be offended and will hate and betray their brethren who claim Christ as their Messiah (cf. Mt.24:11).

> **"[12]And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. [13]But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"** (Mt. 24:12,13).

This verse speaks of the necessary perseverance of the believing Jew in that day when they are hated by their fellow Jews, whose love for their brethren had grown cold in their hatred of Christ. Nevertheless, he that shall endure in the warmth of their faith unto the end, shall be saved.

The Gospel of the Kingdom to be Preached

> **"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in**

> **all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"** (Mt.24:14).

The Gospel message has two significant aspects: the first is the hope of personal salvation for the Gentile, while the second is the hope of a glorious Kingdom age for the Jew.[576] In this verse, the emphasis is placed upon the latter, inasmuch as this text is exclusively applicable to Jews living in the last days after the Church has been removed. In spite of the Antichrist's attempts to quash the Gospel of the coming Kingdom Age, the good news of the immanency of Christ's Kingdom will find its way into every nation upon the face of the earth, and only then shall the end of the age come to pass (cf. Mt. 24:3).

The Abomination of Desolation

In angry response, the Antichrist will become desperate to retain his power, inducing him to break his covenant with Israel at the mid-point of the seventieth week (cf. Da. 9:27), and to desecrate the Third Temple[577] in Jerusalem with a satanic idol representing himself. This is the "Abomination of Desolation" spoken of by Daniel the prophet**,** which is reiterated here in this discourse by our Lord:

> "**When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)"** (Mt.24:15);

The fearful idol of the Antichrist, which can move and speak and is imbued with various astounding powers through an advanced artificial intelligence, will be set up within the Holy Place of the Third Temple as an object of worship. The Temple will be so defiled with

[576]Both are aspects of the same Gospel, which is squarely based upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. While the Jew looks forward to Christ's return to establish a Kingdom Age upon the earth, Gentile Christians look forward to their future transport off the earth to gather with Him in the clouds of the air and ultimately to enjoy eternal life in his presence within a Heavenly Kingdom established beyond all presently known space and time.

[577]cf. Third Temple of the Last Days, page 516.

this abominable idol that the Temple, the city of Jerusalem and all of Judaea will become a place of spiritual devastation and defilement.

The Apostle Paul had warned of this future satanic deception and its consequences in his second epistle to the Thessalonians:

> **"[3]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; [4]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, shewing himself that he is God"** (2Th.2:3,4).

In response to his being unveiled as an agent of Satan, the Antichrist will demand that all worship of the one true God cease, and will brazenly prepare a throne for himself within the Third Temple. From that stolen place of authority, he will arrogantly declare that "he is God" and shall command the sole worship of all mankind.

Thus, the Antichrist will be openly revealed to Israel and to the entire world as the man of sin that he is, not the deliverer that many had supposed him to be. His unveiling will result in a mass exodus of believing Jews out of Judea, which he has completely defiled.

Mass Exodus of Jews from Jerusalem

In the following text, Jesus describes that desperate exodus in words that echo the earlier mass exodus of Jews from Judaea prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in AD 70:[578]

> **[16]"Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: [17]Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: [18]Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. [19]And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! [20]But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on**

[578]cf. Lu. 21:20-24; page 541.

the sabbath day:" (Mt. 24:16-20).

In their great haste, they can take nothing with them but the clothes that are already upon ther backs. God will prepare many of the dispersed Jews a hidden place of safety for the next 3 ½ years (cf. Re. 12:6), but, a large number (i.e. 144,000) sealed Jews will remain in Jerusalem and Judaea during the terrible affliction that is rapidly approaching.

The Great Tribulation

Jesus refers to the period of time following the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation in Matthew 24:15, as a time of great tribulation:

> **[21]"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. [22]And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened"** (Mt.24:21,22).

This period will constitute a time of insane hatred and global slaughter of Jews the likes of which the world has never before experienced nor ever shall again experience in the future. Nevertheless, this "great tribulation" that begins near the middle of Daniel's seventieth week does not continue to the end of the seven-year period; for, it will be abruptly "cut short" by the Lord Jesus Christ, through the sudden appearance of the sign of his return in the visible heavens (cf. Mt. 24:29,30) – lest his Elect should perish along with all other flesh if it had been allowed to continue any longer.[579]

The Sign of Jesus' Return

Thus, at this place in his discourse, Jesus begins to speak to his Apostles of his future return that will occur at the end of this current age.

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[579]Within the context of this passage, this reference to "the elect" in verse 22 is specifically applicable to those 144,000 believing Jews who have been sealed and chosen to remain in Jerusalem as well as many other elect Jews who had heeded their message to trust Christ as their Messiah.

This answer is in direct response to the Apostles' second question concerning the sign of his coming.

Warning of False Christs and Prophets

> **[23]Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not. [24]For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.[25]Behold, I have told you before. [26]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** (Re.24:23-26).

Many false "Christs" and false prophets will arise to deceive many through the exercise of false miracles. None of his Elect should be deceived into believing that Jesus has secretly arrived and is hiding somewhere upon the earth, for Jesus had earlier warned the Elect regarding Satan's delusive deception through those false prophets and false "Messiahs" (cf. Mt.24:4,5).

The Rapid Unpredictability of Christ's Return

Then, Jesus informs them of the suddenness of his future return to the earth. His appearance upon the earth will be as rapid and as unpredictable as is a bright lightning stroke,

> **"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"** (Mt. 24:27).

This verse also expresses the universal visibility of Jesus' return by all the inhabitants of the entire earth all at one time – just as lightning that strikes in the east is also visible in the west. There will be no doubt whatsoever of his arrival or of his true identity when He comes.

> **"For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together"** (Mt.24:28).

Great corruption must always bring forth great judgment in return, just as surely as a rotting carcass brings forth vultures to cleanse the land. The terrible corruption that had occurred within the great tribulation demands the imminent judgment of God, which Christ will prosecute at his second coming.

Jesus now answers the Apostles' second question regarding the sign that will herald his return to earth.

> **"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…"** (Mt.24:29; cf. Jl.2:30,31);

Immediately after the great tribulation is cut short, the sun and the moon will go dark and stars will fall out of their place as the natural order of the universe is suddenly jolted into complete disorder. Following this great heavenly upheaval, the entire populace of the earth will see the Lord Jesus Christ coming down out of Heaven in the same clouds of glory in which He had earlier ascended (cf. Ac.1:11):

> **"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"** (Mt. 24:30; cf. Da. 7:13);

The Gentile nations of the earth will morn and tremble with great fear when they see this unambiguous sign, knowing with absolute certainty that it signals the great judgment and vengeance of God for their rejection of his Christ. This judgment will begin the great and terrible "Day of the Lord"[580] that will break upon the earth with seven judgments trumpeted down out of the visible heavens.

However, before Christ begins to execute this series of judgments, two very important events must first take place.

> **"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a**

[580]cf. The Great Day of the Lord is Come, Commentary page 209.

> **trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"** (Mt.24:31).

The Elect that Jesus refers to here are 144,000 believing Jews, which will be gathered together from the four corners of the earth and the vast regions of Heaven to make up a Jewish remnant that will receive a seal of God in their foreheads.[581] This seal will protect them from the great wrath that is to come and so enable them to enter the coming Messianic Kingdom Age on earth in which they will form the nucleus of the sanctified nation of Israel (cf. Re. 7:1-8; 9:4).

The Revelation informs us that the Rapture will occur immediately following the sealing of the 144,000 elect Jews, as a great diverse multitude of people that appears in Heaven.[582] Nevertheless, Jesus does not address this event in his Olivet Discourse, since the vast Church age was as yet unknown to his disciples, and the questions asked by his Apostles had specifically concerned the coming Kingdom Age upon the earth.

Parables of the Interim Kingdom Age

We observe that God has placed a vast interval of time between the Lord Jesus' ascension into Heaven and the moment of his physical return to the earth at the end of this current age. The precise length of that span of time is known only within the mind of God the Father (cf. Mt.24:36). However, we clearly observe that this interval in which we currently live has already covered nearly two thousand years, and at present it appears to have no discernible end. This vast expanse of time was unknown to the Jew living in Jesus' day; they had expected the arrival of their Messiah and the establishment of his Kingdom Age as a rapid transitional event that would take place within their lifetimes.

Earlier on during his earthly ministry, Jesus had begun to elude to various things characterizing an interim kingdom age to come through a

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[581] cf. Sealing of 144,000 from the Nation of Israel, Commentary page 212.

[582] cf. The Church Appears in Heaven, Commentary, page 215.

long series of parables that are recorded in Matthew Chapter 13. When his disciples had asked Him why He spoke in parables, "He answered and said unto them,

> **"Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given"** (Mt.13:11).

Only the Elect, whom God through Christ had given the gift of discernment, could understand the true meaning of Jesus' parables as they applied to the coming Kingdom Age, while the unsaved masses considered them to be but nonsensical unresolvable enigmas.

Returning to the text of the Olivet Discourse, we now find four parables that were spoken by Jesus to his Apostles concerning a vast previously unknown interim age beginning in Matthew Chapter 24, verse 32 and continuing on through Chapter 25, ending at verse 30. Each of the four parables allude to Jesus' physical absence during that age as well as making known a coming day of certain reckoning when He returns at the end of the age (cf. Mt. 24:30).

Parable of the Fig Tree as a Sign

Although Jesus had not answered the Apostles second question in definitive terms as to not precisely knowing when He will return, He now uses a fig tree as an illustration of a way in which it would be possible for believers to discern when the end of the current age is approaching.

> **"[32]Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer** *is* **nigh: [33]So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near,** *even* **at the doors"** (Mt.24:32,33).

Just as we can know with certainty that summer is coming when we see leaves just starting to appear on the trees, for that generation that shall observe the occurrence of prophetic events predicted in Holy Scripture – particularly those revealed in the book of the Revelation – it

will be possible to recognize that the end of the age is rapidly approaching.[583]

> **"[34]Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. [35]Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"** (Re.24:34,35).

The generation that the Lord Jesus speaks of here is a yet future generation that will see all of those prophecies leading up to his return being rapidly fulfilled. This is an emphatic statement, for Jesus says that even as the present heavens and the earth shall one day pass away[584] his Word will remain forever. Regarding any possible knowledge of the exact moment of his return, Jesus said to his Apostles,

> **[36]"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only, [37]but as the days of Noe** *were***, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. [38]For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, [39]And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be"** (Mt.24:36-39)**.**

Men's wickedness had abounded in Noah's day beyond any hope of their redemption. They had gone about in their lives as if the judgment of God did not exist (cf. Mt.24:38). When the judgment of the great flood finally came, Noah's family was kept safe in the ark to go forward into a future age, while the godless masses were left to perish in the great deluge. In like manner, the godly of the last days, who faithfully work and watch for Jesus' return, will remain on earth to enter into the

[583]Many expositors see this fig tree as depicting the nation of Israel, which was politically restored in 1948. However, there is as yet little or no evidence that Israel as a nation is inclined to accept Jesus as their Messiah. Those "mature leaves" and "summer fruit" are yet to appear in the future.

[584]cf. 2Pe.3:10; page 687.

coming Kingdom Age, while the unbelieving reprobate will suddenly be taken away in judgment. This is further illustrated in the following verses:

> **"[40]Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. [41]Two** *women shall be* **grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left"** (Mt.24:40,41)**.**

One man or woman will be prepared and watching, as was Noah and his family when they entered the ark, while the others who are outside the ark of God's protective grace will work on – being blindly unaware of the calamity that awaits him – or her. The "one taken" is analogous to those whose works were found to be ungodly and had perished in the great flood of Noah's day;[585] the other who is left is analogous to Noah whose works were found to be godly, such that they remained alive within the ark of God's protection.

> **"[42]Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. [43]But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. [44]Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Mt.24:42-44).**

As in the day of Noah, we all must diligently work and watch in the age in which we live, lest the Lord should suddenly come unexpectedly and find us totally unprepared to receive Him. Since we cannot know in advance the precise hour of Jesus' arrival, we must always be watching and anticipating his return.[586]

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[585]This verse does not refer to the Rapture as some would suppose, for the context of the global flood denies that supposition. It was Noah who was saved and had remained; it was the reprobate of that age that were taken away in the flood.

[586]cf. The Watchfulness Doctrine, page 504.

In the second parable found in the Gospel of Matthew 24 known as *The parable of the unfaithful servant*, Jesus emphasizes the requirement of faithfulness and wisdom within all of his servants as Stewards whom He has placed in positions of authority over other believers.

Parable of the Unfaithful Servant

> **45"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46Blessed** *is* **that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 47Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods"** (Mt.24:45-47; cf. Lu.12:42-44).

Here the word "household" represents those who are God's' chosen – those who have been adopted into the "family of God." The Lord's valuable "goods" are the body of divine Truth, which He initially had left under the care of his Apostles. The ruler of the household is the current administrator of that body of Truth, whom God has charged with the responsibility of caring for and educating his household with that Truth that he brings forth out of his treasury of spiritual knowledge concerning things that are both recent and of those things of old (cf. Mt.13:52).

That charge was first applicable to Jesus' Apostles, who had laid the firm unchangeable foundation of the true faith, but it is also applicable to various pastors and teachers who must faithfully distribute it and build upon it to increase its value for the Lord's redemptive work as they await his return (cf. 1Co. 3:12-15). Those who do well in this service will receive honor, will be further enlightened, and will be reenlisted to provide even greater service in the future as a "ruler over all his master's goods."

> **48"But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; 49And shall begin to smite** *his* **fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50The lord of that servant shall come in a**

> **day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of, [51]And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"** (Mt.24:48-51; cf. Lu.12:45-48);

The "evil servant" mentioned in this text does not truly believe the Lord will return. Here we also have a picture of the religious charlatan, that we find today both within and without the temporal church. He makes his fellowship with the world, as he berates and abuses his fellow-servants within the household of God for personal gain.

When the Lord returns, this "evil servant" will not accept or welcome Him, but will outright reject Him as an impostor, and deny Him his rightful authority. Consequently, that unfaithful servant will be broken (i.e. cut to pieces) and must go into perdition (i.e. the great inferno) along with all other hypocrites and deceivers. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" over the severity of that well-deserved judgment.

Nevertheless, he who out of ignorance had committed things deserving of judgment shall receive lesser punishment, "for to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (cf. Lu.12:48).

Parable of the Ten Virgins

In this third parable in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus continues to emphasize the requirements of faithfulness, as He specifically differentiates Jewish believers who had wisely prepared themselves as they awaited their Messiah's arrival from the Father's house, from foolish Jewish worshipers that had not anticipated nor prepared themselves for their Messiah's arrival with his beloved Bride, the Church. Turning now to the inspired text, we read,

> **[1]"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. [2]And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. [3]They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: [4]But the wise took**

oil in their vessels with their lamps" (Mt.25:1-4).

The "kingdom of Heaven" in this verse refers to the Millennial Kingdom of Heaven on earth, in which all of the redeemed of Israel will one day populate the Kingdom. The ten "virgins"[587] of this parable obviously cannot represent the Church, for the Church is returning with Christ as his newly married wife. Hence, the ten maidens in this parable must be seen to represent Israel in that day and the "bridegroom" is the Lord Jesus Christ, their Messiah.

In Scripture, the number ten is a perfect number indicating the completion of a cycle; it is therefore symbolic of the authority of God and the obedience and responsibility of God's people toward his Law – as it is exemplified in the Ten Commandments. Men have ten fingers; five on each hand, that can be used for reckoning numbers. On the right hand can be numbered those five "wise virgins: who had supplied themselves with oil for their lamps, while on the other hand, there were five "foolish virgins" who had taken no oil with them. Nevertheless, all ten of them went forth as one group to meet the Messiah.

When Christ the Messiah, gloriously returns to earth at the very beginning of the Millennium, there will be a great marriage feast and celebration prepared on earth so that Israel may also enter into the joy of that glorious union.[588] It is in that context that the "ten virgins" are seen to represent ten groups of Israelites who are awaiting the arrival of their Messiah with his Bride, to join with Him in the glorious procession into the wedding supper on earth – following the earlier marriage ceremony that had taken place in the house of the Messiah's Father in Heaven.

Jesus had previously told his disciples, all of whom were converted Jews, to properly prepare themselves for that coming day with these words:

> **[35]"Let your loins be girded about, and** *your* **lights burning; [36]And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding;**

[587]Greek *parthenos* = "maidens" or "unmarried daughters."

[588]cf. The Marriage Supper on Earth Announced, Commentary page 366.

that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (Lu. 12:35,36).

The "lamps" in verses 1 through 4 of our immediate text represent affirmations of faith, while the light from those lamps represent the truth and substance of those affirmations. The "oil" represents the Holy Spirit who fuels the flame of faith in the lamps of those who truly know and believe in Christ.

The ten "maidens" represent Israel[589] that is evenly divided into two separate groups of five; five are wise and are thus prepared for Christ's return with his beloved Church, and five are foolishly unenlightened regarding the Church and find themselves totally unprepared to enter into this great feast and celebration.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" (Mt.25:5).

The English word "tarry" found here is *chronizō* in the Greek, which means to "take one's time" or to delay. However, the Lord does not tarry or postpone his return, for He will come at the exact moment appointed by the Father without any delay; it is only in the minds of men that the Lord appears to tarry.

This text informs us that even true Jewish believers will slumber and sleep during the interim age preceding the return of Christ the Messiah. The English word for "slept" used in this verse is *katheudō* in the Greek that can be used in a metaphorical sense as being in a state of unawareness, as it does here in this parable. Thus, even genuine Jewish believers may not be immediately aware of events signifying Christ's return with his Church as they concentrate on going about preparing themselves through the faithful performance of God's work here upon the earth.

6"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the

[589]The fact that there are ten and not twelve virgins is somewhat problematic regarding their identity with Israel that was composed of twelve tribes. It could either indicate that the ten groups of Jews awaiting their Messiah are not representative of the twelve tribes, which may be seen as having been blended into one entity, or that two of the twelve tribes are no longer awaiting the return of their Messiah at all.

> **bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. [7]Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps"** (Mt.25:6,7).

When Jesus Christ returns with his Church, it will be as if He had suddenly come in the middle of the night when all were asleep. Awakened from their slumber by the shout of a faithful watcher, the ten maidens representing Israel will immediately arise from their slumber, prepare their lamps (cf. Mt.25:7), and go forward in a procession with their personal testimonies that speak of their love and dedication to Christ, their Messiah.

However, the five unprepared maidens quickly realize that their lamps give forth no light since they have no oil to fuel them. Their witness is dark, for they had not been enlightened of the truth regarding Christ and his beloved Church. Although they greatly desire to attend the feast and great celebration with their Messiah, they have no sound knowledge of its great significance.

> **"And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out"** (Mt.25:8).

In desperation, the foolish maidens implore the wise to impart a portion of their oil; that is, the substance of their faith, to them. To believe that this transfer is possible would be tantamount to attaining salvation by association, a false doctrine commonly held by many of the unsaved in many of today's temporal churches. For, true faith comes about only by hearing and by accepting all of the Word of God as Truth (cf. Ro.10:17). This occurs only when the Holy Spirit indwells the sinner, and makes the things of Christ real to them.

> **"But the wise answered, saying,** *Not so***; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves"** (Mt.25:9).

This is a rather strange response by the wise "maidens" of Israel, which seem concerned that if they should share their faith with the foolish it would somehow diminish their own faith. Nevertheless, it is being made in response to the unwise thinking that it would be possible for the

wise to give them a portion of the knowledge provided by the Holy Spirit who indwells them. The Holy Spirit, which the oil represents, cannot be purchased with gold or silver (cf. Ac.8:18-20); He is a priceless gift of God of Himself, who is bestowed upon those who hunger and thirst after righteousness (cf. Mt.5:6). As we read in the prophecy of Isaiah,

> **"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"** (Is. 55:1).

The "sellers" mentioned in verse 9 can be likened to those who trade in the written Word of God – ostensibly in printed Bibles, and in particular the New Testament that clearly presents Christ as the Jewish Messiah. Nevertheless, the goal of redemption will have been completed by the Holy Spirit within the body of true Jewish believers through the Word by that time. At this point in time, the Messiah has arrived, and there is no more time remaining for the unprepared to acquire a saving knowledge of Christ through a diligent study of God's Word.

> **"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut"** (Mt.25:10).

As the foolish went to buy oil, the bridegroom came. The prepared of Israel had immediately entered into the royal chambers where the marriage celebration is to take place to join in fellowship with the Messiah and his beloved Church, and the door to all the others has been shut tight.

> **[11]"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. [12]But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not"** (Mt.25:11,12).

Surprisingly, the unprepared of Israel demand to be let in to the banquet hall. However, their lamps still remain empty and dark; for they had not sought to study and learn of God's completed Word concerning Jesus Christ and his beloved Church in season.

We could conclude from this parable that half of Israel will have accepted the exalted position of the Church as the married bride of Christ when He returns to earth, while half will have not. Although they all welcome and wish to celebrate their Messiah's return, half as yet remain alienated to Him with respect to his Church. In that sense, they do not truly know the Messiah, nor He them.

For that reason, Christ must turn them away and prohibit them from attending the joyous celebration of his marriage supper that takes place as He returns with his Church at the beginning of the Millennium. While this does not necessarily mean that the unwise will be cast out of the Kingdom, they will not be able to enter into the great redemptive joy of the Lord.

Parable of the Talents

We shall now consider Jesus' fourth parable found in the Gospel of Matthew regarding this present interim kingdom age on earth.

> [14]**"For** *the kingdom of heaven is* **as a man travelling into a far country,** *who* **called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.** [15]**And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey"** (Mt. 25:14,15).

Again, we find the context is in regard to the coming Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth. The "traveler" refers to Jesus Christ and the "far country" refers to the Heavenly domain of his Father, to which He was going following His bodily resurrection from the dead. While there, the Lord Jesus will receive the title deed to the earth from the hand of his Father who had raised Him up from the dead.[590] At the time appointed, Jesus will return to the earth as its rightful all-powerful King to set up his earthly Kingdom, which He will strictly rule over with a rod of iron (cf. Re.19:15).

[590]cf. Re. 5:6,7; Commentary, page 190.

The word "talent" in this Scripture text actually refers to an endowment or gift of valuable property, as does the minas that we find in Luke's Gospel, and not to natural ability, as some may suppose. This valuable property is the Word of God as it relates to the Gospel. The natural capacity of each man to invest that property for gain was considered when the gifts were first given to them.

When Jesus ascended to the Father, He bestowed spiritual gifts on men by means of the Holy Spirit (cf. Ep.4:8) for the purpose of building up his Church and to advance the interim Kingdom toward its full fruition at the end of the age. To some He gave one gift and to some another, while to certain men He gave multiple gifts according to their God-given ability to receive and exercise them.

> **[16]"Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made** *them* **other five talents. [17]And likewise he that** *had received* **two, he also gained other two. [18]But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money"** (Mt.25:16-18).

The first two servants had wisely invested their gifts and had gained an additional amount equal to that which he had been given as a reward for his master. The refusal of the last servant to invest his master's gift according to the best of his ability was an unconscionable act revealing this man's rebellious nature that directly opposed his master's interests.

> **[19]"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. [20]And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. [21]His lord said unto him, Well done,** *thou* **good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. [22]He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou**

> **deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. [23]His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord"** (Mt.25:19-23).

Here we find that these two men had faithfully used their gifts to further their master's work and property and they were rewarded for their faithfulness by the master giving them even greater things to preside over so that they may fully share in the joy of their master's work.

> **[24]"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: [25]And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo,** *there* **thou hast** *that* **is thine"** (Mt. 25:24,25).

This last servant had stubbornly refused to invest his gift. Moreover, he attempts to blame his unfaithfulness on his master by impugning his master's character, saying that he was a hard man that only benefited from the work of others! Hence, he says he buried his precious gift in the ground out of sight lest he lose any of it.[591]

> **[26]"His lord answered and said unto him,** *Thou* **wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: [27]Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and** *then* **at my coming I should have received mine own with usury"** (Mt.25:26,27).

The unfaithful servant condemned his own actions when he acknowledged that the Lord had given him the gift for the express purpose of receiving gain. Sowing their gifts and reaping still more was the pri-

[591]This can be likened to those who have heard and received the Gospel, but out of fear that they could lose their faith in the process, they hide their faith away and refuse to impart the "good news" of the salvation freely offered by Christ to others.

mary purpose for which the servants were employed as Stewards that they may also personally share in the joy of the Lord's work of salvation. As Christians, our task is to sow the Gospel, it is God through the Holy Spirit who brings forth the increase. The more a man exercises his gifts the more the Lord benefits, and the more the servant will receive in turn as a reward for his obedience.

This last servant was wicked and slothful; lacking faith, he was never a faithful servant of his Lord, for he should have known that God would multiply its sum if he had invested his talent in faith of its increase. The other two men had faithfully and joyfully joined in his master's work while this last man had flatly refused to even look upon the one precious gift bestowed upon him, but instead he hid it out of sight. For this treacherous act of betrayal his master commanded,

> **[28]"Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. [29]For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. [30]And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"** (Mt.25:28-30).

God does not assign all of us the same tasks to undertake while we are here on earth. To some He gives many tasks, to others few, and to still others but one extremely important task. Whether we receive many gifts or one, we must seek to exercise each one of them to the best of our ability to further the work of Christ in this interim age. Woe to those who buries his precious gift of faithful witness in the ground, such that the Gospel will have been obstructed to many that could have heard and received it! For his unfaithfulness, the perfidious servant is destined to abide forever in outer darkness where God's light is totally absent.

This text concludes this forth and last parable found in the Gospel of Matthew and with it Jesus' discourse concerning conditions within the interim kingdom leading his return to judge the earth.

Jesus' Future Return to Judge the Nations

In the following verses, Jesus concludes his Olivet discourse by briefly speaking about his future glorious return to the earth at the end of the interim age, at which time He will pass judgment upon the Gentile nations based upon how they had treated his Elect of the nation of Israel.

> **"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory"** (Mt.25:31; cf. Mt 24:30).

Whereas in his first advent Jesus came in the form of a man to die in order to provide an atonement to save men from their sins, in his second advent He shall return as the glorious "**King of Kings and Lord of Lords**" to judge the nations of the earth on the basis of their earlier acceptance or rejection of Him.

> **[32]"And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth** *his* **sheep from the goats: [33]And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left"** (Mt.25:32,33).

All of the Gentile nations will be gathered before Him. The sheep that He places on his right hand represent those nations whose godly leadership had sought to honor Him and had heeded the Gospel of his coming Kingdom. The goats which He placed to his left hand represent the leaders of those nations who had defied and perniciously denied Him his rightful place as King and in so doing had also abused his people.

> **[34]"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: [35]For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: [36]Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came**

unto me" (Mt.25:34-36).

These righteous nations are not a little bewildered by this statement concerning their personal care of Jesus – an event which they cannot recall to mind:

> **[37]"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed** *thee***? or thirsty, and gave** *thee* **drink? [38]When saw we thee a stranger, and took** *thee* **in? or naked, and clothed** *thee***? [39]Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? [40]And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done** *it* **unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done** *it* **unto me"** (Mt. 25:37-40).

In the context of this prophecy that was given to his Apostles, Jesus' brethren are unquestionably those brothers after his own flesh – those within the family of Israel into which He was born upon the earth. Thus, those nations will be judged on the basis of how they have treated their Jewish populations during the interim age.

> **[41]"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: [42]For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: [43]I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not"** (Mt. 25:41-43).

In blind ignorance, those evil nations will deny that they have ever badly mistreated Him; for they do not even recall that He has ever visited them.

> **[44]"Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? [45]Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not**

> **to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. [46]And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal"** (Mt.25:44-46).

Let every nation that hates and persecutes Israel and God's chosen people take particular notice of this warning of their ultimate destruction through the spoken Word of their Messiah concerning their coming judgment at the end of the age. Only those righteous Gentile nations who have safely harbored and nurtured his own will enter the Millennial Kingdom that follows.

Jesus Speaks of His Imminent Departure

Having concluded this sweeping discourse on the end times, the Lord Jesus then speaks directly to his Apostles concerning his imminent departure through death by crucifixion.

> **[1]"And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, [2]Ye know that after two days is** *the feast of* **the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. [3]Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, [4]And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him"** (Mt.26:1-4).

Jesus' departure of which He had spoken earlier was indeed near at hand in his victorious ascension into Heaven (cf. Ac.1:9), which had followed his atoning death by crucifixion and his glorious resurrection from the tomb that could not hold Him. ■

The Mystery of Iniquity

In this article,[592] we shall explore the deep mystery surrounding the existence of iniquity, a wicked evil that prevails in the very presence of a Holy all-powerful God who abhors and explicitly opposes it. In his second letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul briefly spoke of this mystery concerning the prevailing inexplicable presence of iniquity as something that is already at work through a wicked entity:

> **"[7]For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth** *will let,* **until he be taken out of the way [8]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"** (2Th.2:7,8).

The English word "letteth" in verse 7 is *katechō* in the Greek that means "he who possesses and retains it." As we shall discover in this treatise, he who "letteth" iniquity is Satan, the wicked one, the prince of the air, who presently rules over the earth through his continual spread of iniquity. One day Satan will be taken out of the way, as Christ arrests and imprisons him at the moment of his glorious return to the earth to lay claim to his rightful place as the sovereign ruler over the earth. At that point in time iniquity will all but cease to exist upon the earth, as Christ's perfect righteousness fills the earth in its place.

It must be stated at the outset that this is a very difficult subject to contemplate, which in many ways is beyond all human understanding. That said, we shall now attempt a rather simplistic analysis of this mysterious enigma in hopes of gaining some small insight concerning it from our frail human perspective; for, whether we can fully understand it or not, we are deeply entangled within it during this present age.

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[592]This is an edited version of an article first presented as a Newsletter Article in September of 2019.

The Theodicy

Inasmuch as God is holy, just, good, and omnipotent, the question immediately arises regarding how iniquity can simultaneously exist in his exalted presence. This mysterious conundrum is commonly referred to as the Theodicy, which has been described by theologians and biblical scholars in various ways as follows: 1) "The vindication of divine goodness and providence in view of the existence of evil." 2) "A defense of God's goodness and omnipotence in view of the existence of evil." 3) "An explanation of why a perfectly good, almighty, and all-knowing God permits evil." and 4) "A vindication of God's goodness and justice in the face of the existence of evil." Yet, none of these statements attempt to explain the source of iniquity that persists within this incredible conundrum.

In the text that follows, we shall first define "mystery" and "iniquity" and then seek to determine iniquity's source. Following that, we shall examine God's determined effort to eradicate it. God's effort cannot be seen as having come about through one single instantaneous act; instead, it is being accomplished through a long and painful process that He is orchestrating over a vast period of time.

Mystery

Let us begin by closely examining the phrase "mystery of iniquity" that Paul used in Second Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 7. The English word "mystery" where it is found in Scripture, is derived from *mustǣri-on* in the Greek, which literally means to "remain silent concerning an important matter." Many mysteries were hidden from mankind through God's silence in the Old Covenant, only to be later revealed within the New Covenant. The Gospel was one such mystery (cf. Ro.16:25), as was the mystery concerning Christ Himself (cf. Ep. 3:4). The Apostle Paul also spoke of the mystery of faith (cf. 1Ti.3:9) as well as the mystery surrounding how a man and woman become one flesh in marriage (cf. Ep.5:31,32), and the ultimate mystery of the triune Godhead:

"And without controversy great is the mystery of

> **godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"** (1Ti 3:16).

While the New Testament shines considerable light upon those mysteries, the mystery of iniquity largely remains an unresolved enigma – until we encounter the Book of the Revelation.

Iniquity

The English word "iniquity" is derived from *anomiain* in the Greek, which is a broad legal term that includes any transgression or violation of God's divine law and will. Iniquity is not a created thing, nor is it natural to God's universe; rather, it describes the corruption of that which God had previously created and had declared to be good. For that reason, God vehemently hates iniquity and greatly desires to eradicate it. Synonyms for iniquity include, a dark state of mind, willful lawlessness, wickedness, immorality, and many other evil thoughts and acts of every imaginable sort that are collectively referred to as sin. Iniquity thus defined, we must now proceed to determine where and how iniquity first found its way into God's perfect universe.

The Angelic Hosts

In eternity, even before the physical heavens and the earth were created, God had created a multitude of magnificent highly-intelligent angelic beings. Those angelic beings were created of pure spirit that had been taken from God's very own substance. In that sense, they were more "god-like" than any other of God's created beings. That said, however, they are not God or "gods," but creatures that are inferior to and fully subordinate to God.[593]

Chief among the angels were three archangels who are named in Holy Scripture as Gabriel, Michael, and a third archangel named "Lucifer" (Hebrew, "bright son of the morning"). This definition found

[593]cf. The Inferiority of the Creature to the Creator below on page 575.

within Lucifer's name likely means that he was the first to have been created and was also the most brilliant of the three. Each archangel commanded a loyal host of subordinate angels holding lesser rank under their direct supervision. All three of the archangels and their great hosts were faithfully subservient to God with fierce loyalty and were absolutely perfect in all their ways.

The Origin of Iniquity

Incredibly, we are told that that state of absolute perfection had become corrupted within the great archangel Lucifer. In the prophecy of Ezekiel, we find a passage of Scripture that helps us to gain some understanding of how this iniquitous state of corruption could have come about in a resolutely upright and perfect being:

> **"Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD;"** (Eze 28:12a).

Ezekiel was told to lament the fact that the king of Tyre had been taken over in his speech and fully controlled in his actions such that through them he carried out the will of Lucifer, just as if he were actually Lucifer himself. Thus, when God tells Ezekiel (i.e. "son of man") to say unto the king of Tyrus "Thus saith the Lord God," he is not speaking against the king of Tyre per se, but against Lucifer who motivates and controls him from within. This becomes more evident in the verses that follow:

> **"Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty"** (Ez.28:12b).

Lucifer was filled with a self-acquired wisdom, the sum of which was greater than that of all the other creatures God had created, and which Lucifer kept sealed within his own mind seemingly hidden away from God. He was also the most prominent and most beautiful of the three archangels. His beauty was a perfected beauty that was unsurpassed by any other created being for,

> **"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every**

> **precious stone** *was* **thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created"** (Ez.28:13).

The Eden spoken of here is a Heavenly *Eden*, the garden of God, after which the Eden on earth had been patterned as a type. While the earthly Eden had every imaginable plant of great beauty bearing nourishing fruit to satisfy the flesh, this Heavenly *Eden* bore colorful gems of infinitely greater spiritual beauty. All of the precious gems mention here were given to Lucifer as his covering or garment. His *tabrets* (i.e. timbrels) and pipes (i.e. bezels) had been especially prepared to receive those beautiful gems in the day he had been created. He was thus a marvelously adorned creature.

> **"Thou** *art* **the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee** ***so:*** **thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire** (Ez. 28:14).

Lucifer, an anointed angel, had enjoyed the closest possible companionship with God having walked upon His holy mountain in the midst of the stones of fire[594] that had acted as his beautiful covering – until the hidden fault of iniquity was suddenly revealed in him. We read of this terrible disclosure, as God revealed his knowledge of it to Lucifer:

> **"Thou** *wast* **perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee"** (Eze 28:15).

Therefore, we find that "iniquity" had its origin within Lucifer, the highest ranking of the three archangels, whose pride in his personal beauty and favored position with God had so corrupted him that he came to see himself as equal, even superior, to God his Creator.

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[594]Stones of fire most likely refers to the substance and activity from which the cosmos was initially formed.

The Disastrous Consequence of Lucifer's Iniquity

> **"By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire" (Ez. 28:16).**

The pride in his position, beauty, and possessions had filled the midst of Lucifer with a violent profane sinful nature such that God had necessarily determined to destroy him and cast him out of the midst of the stones of fire, the merchandise of which had greatly fueled his personal pride and arrogance. We read of Lucifer's willful determination to usurp God's sovereign authority in the five "I wills" of Lucifer found within the text of the prophecy of Isaiah, which reads as follows:

> **"[12]How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!** *how* **art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! [13]For thou hast said in thine heart, <u>I will</u> ascend into heaven, <u>I will</u> exalt my throne above the stars of God: <u>I will</u> sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: [14]<u>I will</u> ascend above the heights of the clouds; <u>I will</u> be like the most High"** (Is.14:12-14; emphasis added)**.**

As an immortal intelligent being, Lucifer was fully aware of God's sovereign holiness as well as his own rebellious nature. The serious consequences of his evil thoughts and actions were fully known to him, even as he fell from his exalted position in Heaven. For that reason, any atonement for Lucifer's rebellious nature is not possible. His corruption is permanent; he cannot be redeemed nor be saved from himself in which iniquity was first formed. He has, in fact, become the very personification of all that is evil and the perpetrator of violence within the peaceful garden of God. For that offensive activity, Lucifer was cast out of the high places, from the midst of the glittering stones of fire, and he must ultimately be destroyed:

> **"By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire" (Ez. 28:16).**

The Inferiority of the Creature to the Creator

God is absolutely sovereign such that there is, nor ever can be, any other being beside Him. As we find God saying to Israel in the prophecy of Isaiah,

> **"That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that** *there is* **none beside me. I** *am* **the LORD, and** *there is* **none else** (Is. 45:6).

Therefore, we realize that all of God's creatures, no matter how perfectly they are made, must necessarily be inferior to Him who had created them. This is a self-limitation within God's very being that is part of his own nature and is therefore inviolable. Although God forms his creatures perfect at the outset, imperfection inevitably sets in through corruption brought about by a sense of personal pride in their own perfection. The more perfectly creatures have been formed, the greater their potential for self-corruption. This fact was substantiated by the terrible fault that God had discovered within the magnificent archangel, Lucifer. Out of that inevitable self-corruption, self-denigrating iniquity is born that ultimately leads to a totally depraved state of the creature. God's sovereign righteousness demands that the source of that perverted iniquity be eradicated, lest his holiness be severely tainted by allowing iniquity to run unchecked in his otherwise perfect universe.

A Great War is Waged in Heaven

In response to Lucifer's willful iniquity that opposed God, a great war was waged in Heaven against him. It was led by the archangel Michael (cf. Da.12:1), accompanied by all of the other loyal angelic

hosts, against Lucifer, who had been joined in his rebellion by his own host of fallen angels (i.e. demons). Lucifer could not prevail against Michael and all of the other Heavenly hosts that vastly outnumbered his evil forces by at least two-to-one (cf. Re.12:4).

Following his capitulation, Lucifer is thereafter referred to in Scripture as *Satan* in Chaldean, (i.e. "the accuser");[595] in Hebrew *Abaddon* (i.e. destruction); and in Greek, *Apollyon* (i.e. the destroyer), and by various other descriptive names such as "a great dragon," the "old upright serpent," and the devil (Greek, *diabolos*), who is the great deceiver and "accuser of the brethren" (cf. Re.12:9,10). All of those names are a great degradation of his highly honored name, Lucifer, meaning "bright son of the morning," for through his iniquitous rebellion he had profaned his holy position.

Due to the high and powerful position Lucifer had previously occupied, God apparently was unable or unwilling to utterly destroy him – for he was an eternal creature; furthermore, there was as yet none to replace him. As to Lucifer's immediate penalty, He and his demons were expelled from Heaven (cf. Re.12:7,8) and cast down to a newly-formed and desolate earth. This dark watery world became Satan's prison, which was closely guarded by the Holy Spirit, as He brooded over the surface of the waters (cf. Ge.1:2).

God's Plan to Replace Lucifer

God had created the angels and had exalted them with a glory that was only exceeded by Himself. However, iniquity had mysteriously infested Lucifer through his personal pride; and for his iniquitous rebellion against his Creator, he and the vast host of angels under his authority had been cast out of Heaven. Even so, God still had a great multitude of angels under the loyal headship of the archangels Gabriel and Michael. Nevertheless, those angels found themselves incapable of judging Lu-

[595]We shall hereafter refer to Lucifer in this dialog as Satan, the accuser, for he continuously attempts to justify his own iniquity by accusing men of secretly or openly harboring his own wicked fault (cf. Job 1:9-11).

cifer and other angels of their own kind and highly exalted status (cf. Jude v. 9).

Therefore, God required more than what angels could accomplish when He created Adam. As the writer to the Hebrews stated concerning the creation of man,

> **"[7]Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: [8]Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing** *that is* **not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him"** (He.2:7-8).

Man was created to one day judge the world, and to ultimately judge fallen angels as well. The Apostle Paul revealed this fact in an oblique reference found in his first epistle to the Corinthians in which Christians had wrongly appealed to civil authorities to judge matters that were the exclusive right of the Church to judge:

> **"[1]Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? [2]Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? [3]Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life"** (1Co.6:1-3 emphasis added)?

Through subsequent acts of his creation, which took place over five days (cf. Ge.1:3-31), God carefully prepared the earth to become a suitable environment for what would become his crowning glory – a fully sanctified and perfected human race to legitimately share in his glory through the incarnation of the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. That race of immortal men would ultimately provide Him the justification and means He required for the ultimate demise of Satan and his inbred iniquity.

Thus, upon the same earth, upon which Satan and his demons had been previously incarcerated, God prepared a guarded place, a garden (i.e. an *Eden*), as an abode for the first man (i, e. the first *Adam*).

Adam Created a Living Soul

So it was that on the sixth day, Adam, was created by God (cf. Ge.1:26,27). Unlike the angels and other spirit-beings that God had previously created, Adam was created to inhabit a physical material body, which was composed of the same elements contained within the earth itself (cf. Ge.2:7). In that sense Adam was created to be little lower than the angels, who consisted of pure spirit (cf. Ps.8:4,5). Thus, Adam was created with a limiting imperfection imposed upon him by his physical flesh. When first formed, Adam's physical body was still and lifeless, until God breathed the spirit of life into it. It was at that very moment that Adam became a living soul, composed of both body and spirit.

Adam's Initial State of Innocence

Having no past history or innate knowledge, Adam was created completely innocent – morally, he was a "blank slate." God had said after surveying all that He had created that it was all "very good" (cf. Ge. 1:31), The Hebrew word for good, *tobe,* describes the positive acceptability of a thing or activity for its intended purpose. Therefore, it is important for us to understand that "very good" does not equate with absolute perfection, such that Adam's initial innocence did not indicate that he was a perfect being.

The *Imago Dei*

Inasmuch as Adam was created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*), he received some, but certainly not all of the attributes of God his Creator.[596] Since God the Father is a spirit having no physical attributes, "image" as it found here refers to certain of God's specific spiritual attributes, which He imparted to Adam during his creation. Those shared

[596]This unique state of being differentiates man from all of the animals over which Adam had received dominion.

qualities included life, intellect, a moral sense, a creative propensity, and an appreciation of truth, goodness, love, grace and mercy (cf. *CRC* Book I, Chapter 2.1). Man was created such that when God looked upon Adam, He would see a reflection of Himself through those shared attributes. Nevertheless, specifically withheld from Adam were all of God's essential attributes[597] that must remain unique to the triune Godhead, lest Adam would pridefully come to look upon himself as being equal with God, as did the fallen archangel Lucifer.[598]

The Creation of Eve

God saw that it was not good that Adam should live alone upon the earth, lest his unique state of being should corrupt him as it had Lucifer. Therefore, God created a companion for Adam in order to keep him humble by sharing his position and assisting him in his work (cf. Ge.2:18). Eve was not created directly from the dust of the ground as was Adam, but was taken out of Adam's side (cf. Ge.2:21-23). Her soul, although separate from Adam's, was dependent upon Adam for life. Their lives were inseparable and fully intertwined by God, thus constituting the first marriage of a man and a woman together as two distinct beings sharing one common flesh.

The Problem of Adam's Naivete

For a brief time all was tranquil, as Adam and Eve lived together in perfect harmony within an innocent state of faithful obedience to their Creator, as they walked and conversed with Him in the Garden. They tended and jubilantly ate of the abundant fruit of the trees of the garden – including the fruit of the tree of eternal life, which God had provided for their perpetual existence.

Nevertheless, God could not allow this childlike state to continue; for, a state of total innocence also meant that Adam and Eve were com-

[597]cf. *God's Attributes, CRC* Book I pages 85-93.

[598]Those shared attributes had become severely corrupted as a consequence of Adam's disastrous fall into sin (cf. *CRC* Book I, Chapter 2.2).

pletely ignorant as well. Although they regularly walked with God in the garden, they could have no intimate knowledge of Him or his ways, nor could they communicate with Him concerning anything of eternal significance. They were essentially automatons that acted and reacted spontaneously, not with reason born out of knowledge.

Being totally naive, they had no real understanding of the goodness that they enjoyed, for they had no knowledge of anything contrary with which to compare it. While breaking down the wall of innocence would prove disastrous for Adam in the short term, it was imperative for God to allow it in order to develop a future redeemed mankind that would fully know Him, and would freely choose to serve Him out of an abiding love and knowledge of all that He is and for all that He had accomplished on their behalf.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

To facilitate the necessary end of Adam's innocence, God had placed a tree within the garden that bore a fruit which when eaten would infuse Adam with a sudden "knowledge of good and evil" (cf. Ge.2:9). This tree was located at a very prominent place probably near the very center of the garden.[599] Adam was directly informed by God that the eating of that fruit was strictly prohibited, and had warned him that should he do so, it would bring death upon him. This was the only prohibition that Adam had received, and the consequences for failing to heed it would be unthinkable – death (cf. Ge.2:17). Heeding God's warning, it is quite probable that Adam, with Eve close by his side, had carefully avoided even looking upon this fruit for some time and were not seriously tempted by it.

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[599]The tree in the center of the garden did not simultaneously produce evil and good fruit, but instead produced a single fruit that when eaten would give an enlightened awareness and knowledge of both good and evil. Good and evil are two paths of thought and conduct that are in direct opposition one to the other. Inasmuch as the two paths were antithetical to the other, it would prove impossible to simultaneously follow both, or to alternate back and forth from one to the other. Evil corrupts good, and good obliterates evil much as light obliterates darkness; in the human mind each concept continuously wars one against the other.

The Termination of Adam's Innocence

Following the warfare in Heaven in which Satan was soundly defeated, he had been cast down to the earth as we previously observed. So it was that Satan surreptitiously made his way into the garden, by taking upon himself the physical form of a serpent. We know that Satan could not have entered the garden without God noticing him, for God is omniscient. Therefore, we conclude that God must have permitted it to test Adam's innocence in the face of Satan's enticing temptation.

We note, however, that Satan, did not approach Adam directly, but he instead approached Eve, whom he correctly considered to be the weaker (cf. 1Pe.3:7) and more vulnerable of the two, since she had been taken out of Adam.[600]

> "**Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden"** (Ge.3:1)?

Satan started out by cunningly asking a question in the form of a statement, with which he knew Eve would agree was largely true. To Eve's credit, she pointed out the fallacy in the serpent's statement that had cleverly included "every tree," (Ge. 3:2,3), and for that reason she should have immediately sent him away. Instead, she told him of God's prohibition against eating the fruit of one particular tree:

> **"But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Ge. 3:3).**

Her own mention of it immediately brought the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to the forefront as Satan had intended.

> **"[3]And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: [4]For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"** (Ge.3:4,5).

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[600]It is likley that Adam was not present as this exchange took place, for he is not mentioned as having taken any part in this conversation.

Here we find Satan outright lying to Eve about the death penalty God had steadfastly decreed for Adam's disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit of the tree; saying instead that God knew if she partook of it, her eyes would be opened such that she would become "as god" knowing both what was good and what was evil.[601]

Adam's Eyes Opened to the Existence of Evil

After her conversation with the serpent, Eve decided to examine the fruit for herself, and it would appear that Adam had come along beside her. She determined in her mind that the tree was pleasant to the eyes and that its fruit was indeed good for food (cf. Ge.3:6). Since the serpent had said it was also a tree to be desired to make one wise, Eve yielded to temptation and ate some of the fruit. Then, feeling no immediate ill effects, she also gave some to Adam, who with full knowledge of the express warning God had issued, also partook of the pleasant-tasting fruit (cf. Ge.3:6).

Adam had for the very first time disobeyed God; Eve had been deceived by the serpent in doing so, but Adam had intentionally and willingly disobeyed God with direct knowledge of the death penalty that God had established for his disobedience. The fruit of the tree was not poisonous, for they did not immediately die physically. However, they did die spiritually, for they had become estranged from their God and Creator who had made them in his own image, which had now become corrupted. Their spiritual death would ultimately lead to their physical death.

The Strange Attractiveness of Evil

Once done, this sinful act of disobedience was irreversible. Immediately, both their eyes were opened to the existence of evil as a possible, even desirable, alternative to good. From then on, evil and the iniquity it spawned would have a strange attractiveness to mankind as something very pleasant to contemplate and something that was even more satisfy-

[601] Only God can determine what is good and what is evil; Since evil stands in opposition to God's goodness, it cannot be allowed to prevail in His universe.

ing in which to actively participate. Through the continuation of iniquity, they sought to gain an alien knowledge that was both powerful and in direct opposition to God's sovereign Word and purpose. In doing so, they believed that they would no longer need God, nor need they heed his commands. They would think for themselves as being their own god, able through an illicitly gained knowledge to sustain themselves and determine their own destiny apart from Him.

The Penalty of Death Enforced

Nevertheless, that was all based upon Satan's lie, not upon Truth, and God's death penalty stood in direct opposition to his lie. Adam and Eve could no longer claim innocence or ignorance, for they had been infused with Satan's rebellious desire for iniquity.

While in their innocent state, their bodies had brought to mind no iniquitous thoughts, for they were clothed in the eternal luminescence of the Holy Spirit who had indwelt them and gave them life. As they sinned, the breath of eternal life immediately left them, and the divine light that had covered them was immediately extinguished. Their exposed bodies were then seen as being ugly and very shameful, for they discovered that they were but as the clay of the earth. In an attempt to assuage their shameful condition, they covered their naked bodies with fig leaves and hid themselves among the trees of the garden, lest God should find them in this disgraceful state:

> **"[8]And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. [9]And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where** *art* **thou? [10]And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I** *was* **naked; and I hid myself. [11]And he said, Who told thee that thou** ***wast*** **naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat"** (Ge.3:8-11)?

Soon enough they heard the voice of God walking in the garden to meet with them and calling to them. Adam's excuse for hiding himself was that he was afraid to show himself for he was naked and ashamed of his exposed body. The only way that Adam could have known that he was naked was that he had partaken of the forbidden fruit, and God in his omniscience knew that.

In an attempt to avoid God's judgment for their personal disobedience, Adam and Eve began attributing their act of disobedience to another, thus further debasing themselves:

> **"And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest** *to be* **with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What** *is* **this** *that* **thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat"** (Ge. 3:12,13).

The man blamed his wife, and he indirectly blamed God for having given her to him. Eve in turn blamed the serpent for her disobedience. God's judgment was both swift and decisive upon them all beginning with the Serpent, then upon Eve, and finally upon Adam (cf. Ge.3:14-17).

> **"[22]And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: [23]Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken** (Ge.3:22,23).

Inasmuch as man had acquired the knowledge of good and evil, which was the sole prerogative of God, he had forfeited eternal life lest he become as god in his own right (cf. Ge. 3:5). Thus, God evicted Adam from the garden of Eden, in which grew the tree of life, to tend instead the bare ground from which his body had been taken.

The Rapid Spread of Iniquity throughout the Human Race

Satan's iniquity rapidly spread like a wild fire out of control to consume all of Adam's race, such that all men must now endure physical death, the penalty that God had prescribed for Adam's initial act of disobedience. Adam's iniquity was quite evident in Eve's first child, Cain, who was so infected with Satan's iniquity that in an act of jealous rage he murdered Able, his younger brother (cf. Ge. 4:8).

For a period of about fifteen-hundred years, Adam's fallen race was allowed to continue on without divine intervention – until it had finally reached a depth of sinful corruption so great that God determined to destroy mankind in a great universal flood.[602] Out of that early perverse generation, God chose to redeem one man, Noah, along with his immediate family, in order to establish a fresh new beginning for the human race on earth (cf. Ge 7:23b).

Nevertheless, Satan had survived that deluge completely unscathed inasmuch as he is a spirit-being having no physical substance. Thus, he immediately renewed his blasphemous rebellion against God by again spreading iniquity throughout the post-antediluvian human race, by first corrupting Noah and then perverting Ham, his youngest son (cf. Ge. 9:21-23).

God's efforts to Curtail the Spread of Iniquity within Humanity

The Scriptures chronicle two momentous events in which God took decisive action to prevent the human race from again being fully submerged within sinful iniquity.

First, through an act of unmerited grace, He called forth Abraham out of egregious idolatry to obediently serve Him (cf. Ge. 12:1,2). Secondly, through the righteousness He had imputed to Abraham for his faithful belief in Him (cf. Ga. 3:6), God established a great nation, Is-

[602]cf. Ge.6:5-7; 7:11-22; Newsletter Article August 2015.

rael, from a ragtag people that He had freed from cruel bondage in Egypt. He sought to halt the spread of iniquity within that chosen nation by establishing a strict legal system, the basis of which were ten written commandments that He gave to Moses. God also established a ceremonial law along side those commandments through which the death penalty for every transgression of the law was demonstrated by the sacrifice of innocent animals.[603]

God had at first established human judges to rule over the people (cf. Jd. 2:16 ff.), but when that failed to sufficiently curb man's evil passion for iniquity, he gave them kings to more sternly rule over them. Israel failed to live up to God's high legal standard despite repeated warnings of God's spokesmen (i.e. his prophets) that He had repeatedly sent to them. Each time Israel fell into the throws of iniquity, they were severely judged by God, after which a remnant repented and were restored by Him – only to fall again. For the blood of bulls and goats could never provide a permanent atonement for mankind's sin (cf. He.10:4); it required the sacrificial death of a fully righteous man. Yet, among all of the descendants of Adam none could be found, for all men were infected by iniquity from the very moment of their conception (cf. Ps. 51:5; Ro. 3:23).

God Provides Complete Atonement for Man's Sinful State

> "**But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"** (He. 2:9).

Lastly, God sent his divine Son to Israel, who like man was also made a little lower than the angels, having taken on the form of human flesh for the suffering of death through his miraculous incarnation in the

[603]It also demonstrated how a man's iniquity could be imputed to another to provide a penal substitutionary atonement acceptable by God to prepare them to receive their coming Messiah, the Christ, the ultimate sin bearer.

womb of a human mother (cf. Lu. 2:10-14; Re. 12:1,2). Unlike an angelic being, Jesus Christ was and is forever both God and man; and as such, is not a creature that He could ever corrupt Himself through personal pride as had Lucifer (cf. Ph. 2:6,7).[604]

An apostate unbelieving Israel rejected and cruelly crucified Jesus, their Messiah, which ultimately led to the destruction of Jerusalem and its Second Temple in AD 70. Nevertheless, iniquity's eradication was to be accomplished by God through a sanctified remnant of mankind, purchased by the penal substitutionary death and blood of His incarnate Son.

Even as Eve was taken from the side of Adam, so out of the riven side of Jesus Christ came forth his beloved Church, which is far more beautiful and consecrated than was Adam's Eve. Even so, Satan immediately sought to corrupt the Church with his evil passion for iniquity even as he had Eve.

Mankind's Propensity to Cling to Iniquity

Although perfect atonement for mankind's sin was provided some two-thousand years ago, in the days in which we currently live, the mystery of iniquity is still very much at work; inasmuch as Satan tenaciously holds fast to men's minds through which he propagates his iniquity, and he will continue to do so – until he is ultimately taken out of the way in the brightness of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 2Th.2:7,8).

In the Preamble to this book, we described how this iniquity within depraved individuals of this present age has fully infiltrated our many temporal churches, our families and societies as well as our national governments from the very top down.

As the perilous final seven years of this age looms up before the world,[605] even those of us who are securely in Christ must be on constant guard against any hint of iniquity born of a false sense of pride in self. We must always remember that apart from Christ, we are but as the clay

[604]cf. The Inferiority of the Creature to the Creator, page 575).

[605]cf. The Seventieth Week of Daniel, page 530.

of the ground, for even our faith in which we take our stand has been freely given to us only by and through Him who died for us (cf. Ro.12:3). It is Christ and Christ alone whom we must trust for our salvation, not anything that is within ourselves, lest we pridefully corrupt ourselves.

Man's Future Absolution and Great Reward

We mortals are but pawns in God's great war against iniquity, but for those of us who overcome iniquity through faith in Jesus Christ, the reward is very great indeed (cf. Ro. 8:35-39). For, it is He...

> **"Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"** (2Ti.1:9).

The resurrected and glorified Christ is presently poised at the right hand of God to permanently replace Satan, as the last seal of the scroll containing his eternal inheritance is broken open (cf Re.11:15). And within the eternal ages to come, the sanctified remnant of mankind that He has purchased with his own blood will replace all of the fallen angels that had been under Satan's command. In doing so, man shall come to know, love, and serve God as He truly is. This will be mankind's exceedingly great reward.

Iniquity Eradicated Forever

As Christ and his glorified remnant of redeemed mankind takes their rightful place within Heaven, Satan and his demonic angels will be cast into the eternal lake of fire, located in the vast depths of outer darkness (cf. Re.20:10), never to be seen or heard from again. Thus, the mystery of iniquity actively existing within the very presence of God's absolute omnipotence will have been fully resolved, as the source and existence of that iniquity is forever eradicated from God's perfect universe through His perfectly executed justice. ■

Babylon, the Satanic Root of False Religion

God had out of necessity destroyed all of mankind through the great flood that submerged the entire earth under water inasmuch as they had become so evil that they were beyond any hope of redemption (cf. Ge.6:5-7). Nevertheless, He graciously saved Noah and his sons so that the human race could have a new beginning through them (cf. Ge. 6:8). We must note, however, that the fallen sin-nature of Adam had not been resolved, such that iniquity remained within the human race through Noah, his sons, Japheth, Shem, Ham, their wives, and ultimately their many descendants. Moreover, Satan had not yet been dealt with, such that his open rebellion against God continued on unabated.

The Early Babylonian Religion

In the aftermath of the great flood, Satan fiendishly determined to establish a satanically-inspired religion in direct opposition to God's Word and redemptive purpose. The manner in which this satanic religion came about is somewhat blurred by the fact that we must piece together an account that is only partially recorded in Scripture, which must then be supplemented with recorded legends and the marginally reliable writings of ancient historians. Therefore, the scenario that follows is a carefully considered interpretation based upon that combined information.

Although Japheth and Shem had fully inherited the Adamic sin-nature, we find that Satan had specifically singled out Ham to serve him in his rebellion against God. As for Noah, he had become a husbandman after the flood – most probably his occupation prior to undertaking the construction of the ark. During what was apparently a family celebration of an abundant grape harvest, Noah sinned by becoming drunk with wine, and while in a deep stupor, he was laying naked and uncovered in

his tent (cf. Ge.9:20,21). Ham discovered his father's nakedness and called on his two brothers to join with him in abusing and ridiculing him. However, Ham's brothers refused to do so in deference to the privileged position their father held with God through which He had delivered them all from death in the ark (cf. Ge. 9:22,23).

When Noah awoke from his drunken stupor, he discovered what Ham had done to him, and passing over Ham himself, who had been previously blessed by God along with Noah in the ark, Noah pronounced a curse on Canaan, one of Ham's sons, and on all of Canaan's descendants thereafter without end (cf. Ge. 9:24,25).

Initially, Noah's sons and descendants had multiplied greatly and had begun to spread out over the earth as God had directed them to do (cf. Ge.9:1; 9:7). Japheth's descendants migrated toward Mesopotamia, Europe, and Asia, thus forming the lineage for the great Gentile nations of a future age.

Meanwhile, Shem's descendants occupied the Middle East from whom would come the Arabian tribes, and through Shem's son, Arphaxad, and his descendants on down to Terah, from whom would come Abram (i.e. Abraham), Isaac, and Jacob. From Jacob's descendants God formed the twelve tribes of Israel – God's chosen people from whom would come forth the Messiah, the Christ, the deliverer of all mankind.

Ham's descendants migrated into the land later known as Canaan, and continued on into what would be later known as southwest Asia, and Africa. Ham had four sons, Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan (whom Noah had cursed).

The descendants of Cush migrated into a region that later became known as Ethiopia. The tribes of Mizraim constituted the people later known as the Philistines as well as having migrated southward into an area along the Nile River where Mizraim (also known as *Egyptios*) is believed to have founded Egypt some 160 years following the great flood. Mizraim is also thought to have been the master architect behind the building of the great pyramids.[606]

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[606]We note here that some have presumed that the pyramids were built by an ancient civilization prior to the great flood, but even the great pyramids could not have withstood the powerful tidal

Put's descendants migrated down into Libya in northern Africa, while Canaan and his descendants (the Canaanites) made up the Semitic tribes of the Hittites, Jebusites, the Amorites and the Phoenicians – all of whom occupied portions of the region known today as Palestine.

Nimrod

According to ancient historians, one of Ham's sons, Cush, took to wife an immoral and devious woman named Semiramis.[607] Cush built up a great kingdom and had greatly expanded it through various violent conquests. He first encountered Semiramis while in the midst of just such a conflict. Semiramis was from the city of Erech (cf. Ge.10:10) where she allegedly ran an inn and house of prostitution. Cush begat a son, Nimrod, and it can be assumed from legend that Semiramis was his mother.[608]

Nimrod, founded three great cities on the plain of Shinar (later known as Chaldaea or Babylonia). Those cities were Accad, Calneh, and later on he planned the construction of the city of Babel or Babylon (cf. Ge. 10:8-10; 1Chr.1:10).

The Bible describes Nimrod as a mighty hunter before the LORD (cf. Ge.10:8,9). Inasmuch as God had directed man to eat the flesh of animals in his covenant with Noah (cf. Ge. 9:3), many expositors have assumed that Nimrod was merely skilled in hunting animals for food. It is also commonly believed that he had trained a leopard to be his hunting companion.

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waves of the global flood described in the Genesis account. Moreover, there is no evidence of any significant water damage in them ever having taken place, thus indicating that they must have been constructed after the flood. An unfortunate omission of 600 years that would account for this confusion is found in the Old-Testament text concerning the genealogy from Terah to Abraham (cf. Ge.11:10-26), which has been derived from a later Masoretic text. We discussed this omission in some detail on page 486 of our Article entitled The Mysterious Order of Melchizedek.

[607]cf. Semiramis page 594.

[608]cf. Newsletter Article March 2013.

However, the name "Nimrod" most likely comes from the Hebrew verb "*nimrodh*" which may be translated as "let us revolt." Nimrod was a perverted tyrannical man who hunted and captured the souls of men, enslaving them, and inducing them to follow him in his hostile rebellion against God. This is the probable meaning of the phrase, "before the LORD" found in Genesis 10, verse 9, inasmuch as Nimrod deliberately and openly defied God to his face.

As we have previously read, God had ordered Noah and his sons to "...be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Ge.9:1; cf Ge.9:7), but Nimrod and his subservient followers were defiant – desiring instead to unite all the existing tribes of the people on earth to stand against God in order to live much as they had prior to the great flood.

The Tower of Babel

As they migrated into the fertile plain in the land of Shinar,[609] Nimrod and his followers became determined to build a permanent city there and to build within it a tower that would extend upward in open defiance of Heaven – thus anchoring their resolve to defy God's command to spread out over the earth (cf. Ge. 11:4). The city was intended to provide civil unity through the development of a strong secular society engaged in vast commercialism.[610]

The tower was intended to establish their unity through a satanically contrived religion that openly defied God. Satan had resolved that Babylon would become his seat of power in the post-antediluvian world, and it would thereafter become the source of all false religion, idolatry, and rebellion in the world – even to this present day.

The tower spoken of here was most likely a square-based pyramid or "*ziggurat*," whose method of construction had been retained from the

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[609] It should be noted that the plain of *Shinar* coincides with the region of "*Sumer*" considered by many archaeologists to be the cradle of all human civilization.

[610]The practice of decadent commercialism will ultimately lead to the destruction of the Babylon of the last days, which is recorded in Revelation Chapter 18.

evil days before the flood.[611] It was to be built of burned brick held together by mortar made from an adhesive slime found in abundance within the Shinar plain (cf. Ge. 11:3). Ziggurats commonly supported a level place of worship as a terrace on the very top of the pyramid, which was accessible only by a long series of steps up one or more of its sides.[612]

The improved visibility of the physical heavens[613] after the flood induced men to begin worshiping the sun, moon and the stars – as well as to develop a satanic pseudo-science known today as astrology. An early zodiac was probably planned to be affixed in the place of worship atop the tower to chart the movement of constellations in the star-filled night sky.

The Partitioning of Languages

Following the great flood. all of the people on earth spoke the same language, such that nothing was impossible for them to imagine and to readily communicate and spread those evil imaginings to all others (cf. Ge. 11:6). The wickedness that had existed prior to the flood, for which mankind had been severely judged, remained in the minds of Noah's progeny and threatened to return again in full force. For that reason, God

[611] It must be noted that ruins of various Ziggurats can be found at many places upon the earth surface including South America, where they had been used for human sacrifice. This would tend to support the assumption of a vast proliferation of mankind over the entire earth, who through practicing the evil religions of Satan had resulted in God's harsh judgment of man through the great global flood.

[612]It is unreasonable to assume that the builders actually believed that the top of the tower could have reached up to God's abode in Heaven, as the ancient historian Flavius Josephus recorded as his supposition for its construction. Considering the fact that the flood had covered the highest mountain peaks (cf. Ge 7:20) a tower built upon this plain could obviously offer no safe haven from another global flood.

[613]Before the great flood, we have earlier asserted that a water mantle or canopy had most likely surrounded the earth such that it had only allowed the sun and moon to be seen from earth as bright blurry lights. The light from many of the more distant stars would not have been visible at all. (cf. Newsletter Article August 2015).

confused their speech such that they could no longer universally communicate with each other (cf. Ge. 11:7). This partitioning of languages at first forced them to gather into smaller groups that spoke a common language, and then it began to drive the groups apart from other groups whose speech they could no longer understand. The building of the great city on the plain of Shinar was abandoned as mankind at last began to scatter out over the earth, as God had mandated.

Nevertheless, we find that under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (ca. 1140 BC), at the time he besieged Jerusalem (cf. 2Ki. 24:10), Babylon had been built up into a great walled commercial city. This massive city prevailed until it was later demolished by Cyrus, king of Persia, in about 539 BC. [614]

Semiramis

According to ancient tradition, when Cush died, Nimrod married his own mother, Semiramis, and assumed the office of king. A supposed enemy later murdered Nimrod, and his body parts were scattered abroad. Actually, Semiramis may have been directly responsible for his death – perhaps during a barbarous religious ceremony. Be all that as it may, Semiramis, in an effort to cement her position of authority, claimed that Nimrod was not truly dead, but had been resurrected, taken up to the sun, and thus was to be thereafter referred to and worshiped as Baal, the sun god.[615]

Semiramis also taught her subjects that she was the daughter of the moon, her mother, and of the sun, her father. She claimed to have come

[614]Babylon's remains exist today as a large tell of broken mud-brick and debris about 50 miles south of the city of Baghdad, Iraq. During the recent despotic reign of Saddam Hussein (AD 1979-2003), Hussein had contemplated the reconstruction of a portion of Babylon as a site for one of his grandiose palaces. However, he was only able to reconstruct the main gate of the city before he was overthrown by the United States military in 2003.

[615]Due to the partitioning of languages, Nimrod would later be worshiped by various other names such as Osiris, Vishnu, Mercury, Mars, Zeus, Adonis, Molech, Dagon, and Poseidon. The epic legends of Gilgamesh were most likely derived from this false religion in which Gilgamesh portrays Nimrod.

down out of heaven in a large "moon egg" into the river Euphrates at the time of a full moon following a spring equinox. She also took upon herself the name Ishtar, the pagan goddess of war, love, sex, and fertility. When Semiramis later became pregnant by unknown but most likely illicit means, she claimed that the rays (or spirit) of the sun god had miraculously caused her to conceive.

The son born to her from that pregnancy was named Tammuz (also later called Damu or Damuzi). Tammuz was in time killed by a wild boar, after which the worship of Tammuz was established. It was centered around two yearly festivals: The first festival celebrated his birth to the goddess Ishtar, and the second celebrated his death at the hands of demons in the form of the wild boar. This was immediately followed by Ishtar (i.e. Easter),[616] that took place upon the first "Sun-day" after a full moon that followed a spring equinox, celebrating Tammuz's supposed resurrection and ascension back to the sun.[617]

Variations of the Religion of Semiramis

Variations of this satanically-inspired root religion, spread into various other cultures throughout the world, where Ishtar became known by various other names according to their language. She was consistently referred to as the "queen of heaven," and as such can be identified in Scripture with Diana of the Ephesians (cf. Ac.19:24–35). She was also referred to by many other names, including "Isis," "Innana," "Osiris," "Isi," "Iswara," "Cybele," and "Ostara." Worship surrounding these pagan "goddesses" was commonly attended with drunkenness and extremely immoral activities including institutionalized religious prostitution.

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[616]We wrote of Semiramis and Tammuz in our March 2013 Newsletter Article, in which we discussed the egregious paganism surrounding Easter, some of which is relevant to this current discussion.

[617]Thus, Satan had early on succeeded in planting this foolishness in the minds of mankind in an attempt to confuse and discredit the truth of the future incarnation, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Pagan Religion within Roman Catholicism

In the Revelation, "Babylon the Great" is described as a "woman" who is a "great whore" that "sits upon many waters" as was revealed to John the Apostle while he was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos (cf. Re. 1:9; 17:1),

> **"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"** (Re. 17:2).

The parallel between the text of Revelation 17: verses 3 through 6 and the wealth and visual aspect of the *Roman Catholic Church* along with its history of the bloody persecutions of true Christian believers, especially so during the *Reformation Movement*, is striking to say the very least (cf. Commentary page 337).

The Madonna Cult within Roman Catholicism

Semiramis and Tammuz were often worshiped together, thus forming a mother-son (i.e."madonna") cult that quickly spread throughout the ancient world. Ashtoreth, the supposed "queen of heaven" holding a baby in her arms formed the mystery-religion of Phoenicia.[618]

Therefore, when paganism flooded into the Roman church in the fourth century through a satanically inspired order of the Emperor Theodosius,[619] the ancient worship of Semiramis and Tammuz was adopted to represent the worship of Mary and her infant son, Jesus. As a consequence of this adaptation, the worship of the pagan goddess Semiramis continues on today within Roman Catholicism through Mariolatry,[620] wherein the biblical Mary is falsely deified as the ultimate intercessor

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[618]Semiramis and Tammuz were also known as Isis and Horus in Egypt, Aphrodite and Eros in Greece, and Venus and Cupid in Italy.

[619]cf. *CRC* Book III, page 141.

[620]cf. *CRC* Book III, pages 161-164.

for the sins of mankind through her intimate relationship with the baby Jesus. Mary is also often referred to as "the queen of heaven" by Roman Catholics further identifying her with Semiramis. Thus, we find that the "Mary" the Roman Catholic worships is not the very human and humble Mary of the Bible, through whom Christ was born into the world, but a pagan counterfeit invented after the order of Semiramis.

Any sound biblical-minded Christian looking objectively at Roman Catholicism will discover many other parallels between its many ceremonial practices and the mystery religion of Babylon. For example, the "sign of the cross" closely relates to the Greek letter *tau* that was first used to represent the worship of Tammuz.[621] Moreover, the Roman error of transubstantiation of the Eucharist[622]found within the blasphemous Roman mass echoes the supposed mystical resurrection of Tammuz body that repeatedly took place at each spring equinox.

The biblical doctrine of the Triune Godhead forever subsisting in absolute unity as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has been corrupted by Roman Catholicism into a false "trinity" consisting of the Father, Mother, and Son. The preeminence of Christ as the only mediator between God and man (cf. 1Ti. 2:5) had thus been displaced by an alleged divine intervention taking place through Mary who has been falsely deified by the Roman church. This false deification of Mary was also augmented by the worship of a vast host of church-deified "saints."

The Roman priesthood, with similarly alleged powers of intervention, was obviously derived from the satanic priesthood of Baal, not from Judaism as some would suppose. The Roman Pope's alleged claim to the seat of the Apostle Peter through apostolic succession[623] is false, inasmuch as he actually occupies the seat of Nimrod – and by proxy the seat of Satan. Salvation according to Roman Catholicism is based upon

[621]As we discussed in our book on church history, we cannot even be sure that the cross upon which Jesus died was configured like a Latin cross that is so revered today (cf *CRC* Book III, pages 122-125).

[622] cf. *CRC* Book II, page 450; Book III, pages 188, 217, 230.

[623]cf. *CRC* Book III, page 111.

unquestioned obedience to a "glorified Pope," adherence to the church's seven sacraments, and blind submission to ecclesiastical confessions; it is not attributed to a personal faith in Christ alone.

Moreover, the construction of ostentatious basilicas and high cathedrals by the *Roman Catholic Church* in its prime had its origin in the building of the tower of Babylon that had been similarly undertaken by Nimrod in an effort to unite all people as one through a common world religion. Although those grandiose constructions were purportedly designed to declare the glory of God, they more effectively shouted out the united majesty of those men who had constructed them as well as those who had ordered their construction in an effort to rule over the world.[624]

Residual Paganism within Today's Protestant Churches

While much of the Babylonian paganism of the *Roman Catholic Church* was exposed and cast out during the *Protestant Reformation Movement*, not all of it was eliminated due to the rigid paradigm of churchianity in which the minds of the reformers were held captive. Therefore, much of it remains embedded in present-day Protestant temporal churches as established tradition. For example, infant baptism, which was devised by the Roman church in accordance with the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration,[625] remains as an established practice in many Protestant churches. Some of those churches have also retained the non-biblical office of "Christian priests."[626]

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[624]The mysteries concerning their elaborate construction, which were held by a very select group of workers, later developed into the secretive religious guild of freemasonry (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 146), which lingers on today as the religion of Speculative Freemasonry (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 424-430; also cf. Newsletter Article October 2015).

[625]cf. *CRC* Book II, page 423.

[626] The Bible clearly teaches that all believers in Christ collectively constitute a holy priesthood of believers offering "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Christ" (cf. 1Pe. 2:5,9). Therefore, no one man or group of men can specifically hold a unique office as a priest within the Church.

Moreover, the annual celebration of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ remains on ecclesiastical calendars as Ishtar (i.e. "Easter") Sunday, and the worship of Semiramis, the goddess of fertility continues to take place through "Ishtar" egg hunts on many church lawns.

Protestantism has been greatly weakened by the onslaught of this false Romanist religion over the centuries such that many of today's Protestant churches ignorantly misinterpret the Bible to comply with popular pagan tradition, or they completely ignore the authority of Scripture in their mad rush to align themselves with an increasingly hostile secular world. All the while, Roman-induced ecumenism insistently calls them back through false traditions to rejoin the *Roman Catholic Church* out of which it had earlier extracted itself through much pain and suffering.

The female principal that had originated in the worship of Semiramis has led many Protestant churches to accept the nefarious tenets of feminism as we discussed in our March 2015 Newsletter Article. This corruption has further led to those churches' tolerance of fornication, homosexuality, and even condoning sinful Baal-worship through their tacit, if not outright, acceptance of the slaying of the unborn through the modern abortion movement.[627]

Therefore with the significant exception of old-covenant Judaism and true biblical Christianity, all of the major religions of the world including its many cults and "isms" can be traced back in one way or another to the satanically induced religion of Babylon.

As the earth enters the last days just prior to the unleashing of God's final judgments upon a sinful earth, we can expect the *Roman Catholic Church* to have succeeded in drawing all major protestant churches back into its fold – even as she further adulterates herself by befriending and aligning herself with many other false religions of the world. ■

[627]We warned of this moral corruption in some detail within various Newsletter Articles as well as within the Preamble of this book on page 40.

The Intermediate State of the Dead

When Adam sinned, all of the human race sinned in him, such that through Adam all inherited death. However, when the sons and daughters of Adam died, it was only their mortal bodies that expired in death. The Spirit who had given life to the body at birth immediately returned to God who had given it (cf. Ec. 3:21).

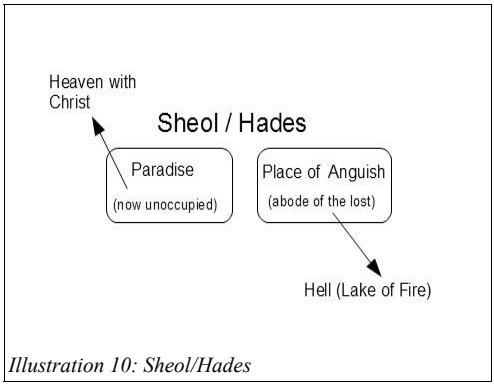

Illustration 10: Sheol/Hades

When men and women of Old-Covenant times died, their bodies went into the grave and their souls went into an unseen place called *Sheol* in the Hebrew tongue or *Hades* in the Greek. This is an intermediate place where the souls of the dead lived on in one of two specific regions,[628] which we have represented in a very simplistic manner here in Illustration 10.

Sheol was not created as a place to incarcerate the reprobate soul for eternity; it is not synonymous with Hell. Nor was it intended to be a purgatory[629] wherein the souls of saints struggle to gain entry into Heaven

[628] Because the souls of man who occupy *Hades* no longer dwell in physical bodies and do not occupy physical space, it must be understood that *Hades* is a spiritual concept, not necessarily an actual physical place. Nevertheless, it must be thought of as a real "spiritual place" having spiritual dimensions and attributes that would be difficult for the mortal mind to comprehend without allegorically ascribing physical properties to it as we have done here.

[629]Purgatory is a mendacious Roman Catholic innovation. Briefly stated, it is seen as a place where the souls of men who have died are purged of every sin committed upon earth, and for which adequate penance had not been confessed and paid in full to the Roman church before death. (cf. *CRC* Book III, page 228).

through penitential suffering or the vicarious works of others on their behalf. *Sheol* was but a place to temporarily hold the souls of the dead prior to the recombining of their souls with a resurrected body that they would receive in the last days – in the day of Jesus Christ.

It must be clearly understood that all souls in *Sheol*, though separated from their mortal bodies, will nevertheless be fully awake and aware of their surroundings and of their circumstances. The notion of "soul sleep" is not anywhere supported by Scripture. Sleep can only apply to the physical body as its sensory functions are suppressed or temporarily shut down. At death, this shutdown is complete and permanent. There are many Bible references attesting to the continued awareness of the human soul during the period between the death and resurrection of the body.[630]

Paradise

Sheol was sharply divided into two far removed regions as is shown in the illustration above; the first region was a very pleasant place referred to as *paradeisos* in the Greek, which is translated three places in the English New Testament as paradise.[631] Paradise is properly defined as a pleasant and beautiful parkland – a spiritual *Eden,* a place of great happiness and comfort where no pain or despair can exist. It was specifically reserved for the righteous souls of Old-Covenant saints such as Abraham who had trusted God and had obeyed his will (cf. Ga. 3:6); hence, this place was commonly referred to as the "bosom of Abraham" (cf. Lu.16:22). While in paradise, Old-Covenant saints could contemplate the even greater joys of a future eternal life in entirely new resur-

[630]cf. Jesus' Narrative of Lazarus and Dives on page 603.

[631]The English word paradise comes from *pairidaeza*, which is a Persian word used to indicate a walled park or an enclosed garden. From the Greek New-Testament word *paradeisos*, it is translated as a park, a place of future happiness and by implication a foretaste of Heaven. Inasmuch as souls existing separate of their bodies can have no physical properties, this region may not have any physical properties but instead have supernatural properties that are nevertheless very real.

rected bodies in Heaven.[632] Therefore, this intermediate state can be thought of as a "vestibule" or "antechamber" of Heaven, wherein the conscious souls of the redeemed saints were temporarily housed as they awaited, relative to earth-time, the future redemption of their bodies.

When Jesus died He went into *Hades,* or more specifically into the region of paradise.[633] Hence, as Jesus hung upon the cross, He explicitly told the believing thief at his side that he would that very day be with Him "in paradise" (cf. Lu.23:43). The soul of the redeemed thief went into paradise where Christ was also going that very day in order to release the souls of many other Old-Covenant saints that were temporarily being held captive there.

Thus, when Jesus arose from the tomb three days later, He took the soul of this believing thief as well as the souls of all the other Old-Covenant saints then residing in paradise into Heaven along with Him within a great procession trailing his own ascension (cf. Mt. 27:52,53); thus, leaving the paradise region vacant.

Today, the souls of all those New-Covenant saints who die in Christ go directly into his presence in Heaven – completely bypassing the intermediate region of paradise within *Sheol*.

The Place of Extreme Anguish

The second region within *Sheol* shown in Illustration 10 above, is a dark doleful place, a region of extreme anguish, reserved for the souls of the reprobate, wherein they must continually contemplate the future

[632]It must be noted that Jesus was resurrected in body, soul, and spirit, and that He also ascended into Heaven in body, soul, and spirit along with the "firstfruits" consisting of those redeemed souls of paradise, whose bodies had slumbered in the earth (cf. 1Co. 15:20).

[633]It is most unfortunate that both *Sheol* and *Hades* were translated as "Hell" in various English texts, including those found in the *AKJV*, for Hell is not where the souls of the reprobate dead immediately go after death. This mistaken association of *Sheol* with Hell has led to a great amount of confusion such as is evidenced by the phrase, "He descended into Hell," which is found in the *Apostles Creed.* Correctly interpreted, Jesus actually descended into *Hades*, and more specifically into the region known as paradise. (The full text of the *Apostles Creed* can be found on the Resource page of our website: www,CRChristianity.org).

eternal torment of both their soul and body in Hell.[634] A vast gulf or chasm separated paradise and this doleful region so that there could be no direct correspondence between the two. It would appear, however, that souls in the place of torment may have some insight into the existence of paradise, which only further increased their torment.

Jesus' Narrative of Lazarus and Dives

Jesus spoke of this perception when He told of two men who had died and as their spirits departed, their souls had entered into *Sheol*.[635] One, a proud rich man, commonly referred to as Dives,[636] was led by his fallen spirit into the region of terrible anguish. The second, a crippled, destitute beggar, named Lazarus, who had once lay despised and neglected at Dives' gate, had been ushered into paradise (i.e. Abraham's bosom; cf. Lu. 16:22).

Dives, being greatly tormented, perceived Abraham afar off in paradise, and he envisioned Lazarus being comforted in his loving embrace.

> **"And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am**

[634]This intermediate place of anguish can be thought of as a "temporary threshold" or "vestibule" of Hell, inasmuch as all that go there will ultimately be cast into Hell following their final judgment by Christ before the Great White Throne (cf. The Great White Throne Judgment, Commentary, page 390).

[635]There has always been some question regarding whether this story is an allegorical parable or a statement of absolute fact. It may be that it is a parable containing allegorical elements that are based upon fact. The word "Hell" found in this passage, is *Hades* in the Greek, and so is often misrepresented as the final eternal state of Hell. However, the final prison of the damned is more properly defined as "the lake of fire," and its first occupant will be the Antichrist at the beginning of the Millennial Age. Therefore, the place spoken of here cannot be Hell, but the invisible world of Sheol that is occupied by the souls of the reprobate dead.

[636] The rich man is unnamed in this text. *Dives* is Latin for "rich man" and is commonly used as if it were this man's proper name.

tormented in this flame" (Lu.16:24).

The words "eyes," "finger," and "tongue" found in this text are somewhat problematic, inasmuch as souls in *Sheol* do not possess a physical body. This must be but a form of anthropomorphism wherein physical attributes are being attributed to non-physical souls. Likewise, the word "flame" in this verse is *phlox* in the Greek, which can literally mean a flame, or perhaps it was but a flash of extreme heat that Dives may have sensed in prospect of the fiery torture he would ultimately receive in his resurrected body within the lake of fire.

> **"[25]But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. [26]And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that** *would come* **from thence."** (Lu. 16:25,26).

Abraham reminded Dives that he had received only good things through his many riches, while Lazarus who had begged at his gate had nothing and had received only evil things from him; and now Dives unreasonably expected Lazarus to comfort him who had previously denied Lazarus any comfort at all. Furthermore, the journey of Lazarus to Dives is not possible, as a consequence of a great impassible gulf that is affixed between Paradise and Dives' place of terrible anguish.

Today, the souls of the reprobate who have not responded to Jesus' offer of redemption continue to go into this place of anguish within *Sheol*. There they must abide in torment until a future day when they will be resurrected in their mortal bodies to stand before the "Great White Throne"[637] to receive their final sentence of punishment based upon their contemptible works while on earth. Only then will they experience the true reality of Hell within the lake of fire. ■

[637]cf. Commentary page 390.

The Resurrection of the Dead

The Greek word for "resurrection" is *anastasis,* which literally means to "stand up again." In the context in which it is used within Scripture, it means that the physical body of man will one day stand up again after death of the body had earlier taken place.[638] The English word "resurrection" is found 42 times in the *AKJV* Bible within the New-Testament text. Although the word "resurrection" is not found within the Old-Testament text, it is nevertheless a major theme of Scripture that has its beginnings in that ancient text (cf. Is.26:19; Job 14:13-15; Ps.16:9-11; etc.).

Resurrection of the physical body is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith; for without a future physical resurrection, the entire basis for a saving faith in Jesus Christ becomes meaningless. Paul makes that fact quite clear in his first epistle to the Corinthians:

> **"[12]Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13]But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: [14]And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. [15]Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. [16]For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: [17]And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. [18]Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. [19]If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"** (1Co.15:12-19).

Indeed, men and women would remain in a miserable state of self-deception and hopelessness if they only look to Christ for the comfort-

[638] There is no way that an noncorporeal soul or spirit can "stand up;" thus, we know that this must refer to the physical body that will stand up again after physical death has taken place.

ing thoughts that He can provide them in this mortal life. When the moment of death finally comes, all of their hopes would be dashed in the last breath of physical reality. That indeed would be our condition if Christ had not been physically raised from the dead by the Father:

> **"[20]But now is Christ risen from the dead,** *and* **become the firstfruits of them that slept. [21]For since by man** *came* **death, by man** *came* **also the resurrection of the dead. [22]For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive [23]But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming"** (1Co.15:20-23).

All men have received the sentence of death from Adam on. In Jesus Christ, the second Adam, we who have been redeemed have received assurance of eternal life in a physical form akin to that of his own resurrected body, such that his resurrection has become the firstfruits of eternal life that is to be received by all that will have died in faith, fully trusting in Him for the redemption of their souls and the future resurrection of their bodies within the Rapture[639] at his second coming.

Two Distinct Resurrections

The Old-Testament Scriptures clearly speak of two distinct groups of people whose bodies will be resurrected to occupy two radically different destinations:

> **"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame** *and* **everlasting contempt"** (Da.12:2).

The Apostle Paul restated this Old-Covenant concept of two separate resurrections within his personal defense of the Gospel before Felix saying,

> **"[14]But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my**

[639]cf. Article, The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church, page 492.

> **fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: [15]and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust"** (Ac. 24:14,15).

The Lord Jesus also spoke of that day in which all of the dead would be resurrected at his command:

> **"[25]Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. [26]For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; [27]And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. [28]Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, [29]And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"** (Jn. 5:25-29).

The day is coming when all of the dead shall hear the voice of Christ and will live again. Inasmuch as the Father has life within Himself, the Son of God also has life within Himself to impart it to those He calls forth. Moreover, as the Son of Man, Christ has full authority to judge those to whom He gives life. One day all those whose bodies now lie dead in their graves will hear his voice and come forth to live again, so that He may pass judgment on them according to whether they have done that which is good or evil within their mortal lifespans. Those who have done that which is good in his Name through the Holy Spirit will receive eternal life, while those who have done that which is evil in complete defiance of Him in accordance with the rebellion of Satan, will receive eternal damnation.

The resurrection of the just and the unjust will be separated by a span of time: the just having been resurrected at the time of the Rap-

ture,[640] followed more than a thousand years later by the resurrection of the unjust at the end of the Millennial Kingdom age on earth. This span is represented by a timeline in Illustration 11 below.

The first resurrection encompasses an interval of time that is anchored in two very significant events: first, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and second, the Rapture of his Church, as is shown. Between those two events, Jesus is preparing a special place in Heaven as an eternal habitation for his resurrected Church so that they may forever live with Him there (cf. Jn. 14:3).

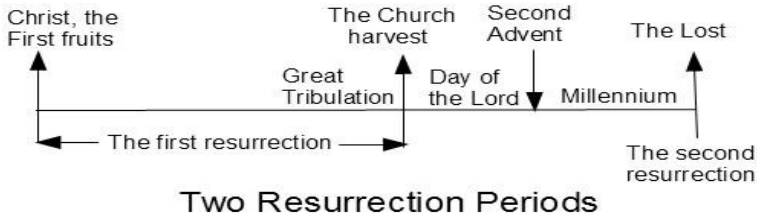

Illustration 11: Timeline: Two Resurrection Periods

The Resurrection of the Just

As we saw in our Article on *Sheol*,[641] Old-Covenant saints residing in the paradise of the intermediate state were raised with Christ at the time of his resurrection (cf. Mt. 27:52,53; page 600) and were carried along with Him within a great procession following his ascension into Heaven, thus constituting the "first fruits" of the just whose bodies now sleep in death (cf. 1Co.15:20).

[640]cf. Article The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church, page 492.

[641]cf. Article, The Intermediate State of the Dead, page 600.

For a period of what now spans nearly two millennia following Jesus' ascension, the souls of those who die in Christ are immediately escorted into his presence to appear before Him to be judged as a part of this first resurrection. The Lord Jesus will stand before them in welcome behind a small rostrum or perhaps but a dais placed under his feet (Greek, *bema*). There they will fix their eyes upon Him whom they love as their soul's exceedingly great reward. In his presence they will receive additional awards commensurate with those things that they have done for Him on earth while they were yet in mortal flesh (2Co. 5:8–10). Thereafter, they shall forever reside with their Lord within the Heavenly estate that He has especially prepared to receive his own (cf. 1Th.4:7; Jn.14:2,3).

State of the Immortal Soul Living within a Mortal Body

It is awkward for us to comprehend ourselves as immortal souls existing within temporal bodies. Nevertheless, that is the true state of the redeemed Christian, while still living here upon the earth. Although our soul was fully redeemed, mortal flesh and blood cannot inherit eternal life and thus must be changed into immortal flesh (cf. 1Co.15:50). Therefore, we must patiently await the future translation of our bodies into this permanent state. The Apostle Paul spoke about our odd existence as a redeemed soul living within mortal flesh apart from the permanence of redeemed bodies in his epistle to the Romans:

> **"[22]For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. [23]And not only** *they,* **but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption,** *to wit,* **the redemption of our body"** (Ro. 8:22,23).

Even so, we as redeemed Christians presently living in mortal corruptible flesh, have a promise of the firstfruits of Christ through the Holy Spirit who is living within us. Yet, we remain in this mortal state as we await our adoption into the beloved as sons of God.

We often groan within ourselves as we yearn for the eventual translation of our decaying physical bodies into a state of permanent existence.

> **"[1]For we know that if our earthly house of** *this* **tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [2]For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: [3]If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. [4]For we that are in** *this* **tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life"** (2Co.5:1-4).

Here Paul refers to our physical body as a "tabernacle" – a temporary tent, a fragile house – that must one day be dissolved into its basic elements in the grave. In this mortal body, we groan being heavily burdened with the persistence of sin resulting in its many inadequacies and impermanence. Therefore, we greatly desire to be clothed with a new and permanent "house" not made with hands as was the earthly tabernacle, but one which is eternal in the Heavens that cannot be dissolved. Hence, the unclothed soul after leaving the mortal body after its death will longingly yearn to be clothed with that new immortal body.

Unification of the Soul with a New Permanent Body

We who are in Christ shall receive those new bodies as Christ returns to call us up to be with Him in Heaven within the Rapture. This is labeled in Illustration 11 as "The Church harvest," of which Christ and the Old-Covenant redeemed were the first-fruits at his ascension. This concluding event of the first resurrection will occur as the souls of the great multitude who are presently with Christ return to earth to reoccupy their resurrected bodies that are immediately transformed into immortal flesh as they rise up out of the grave that has held them captive:

> **"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"** (1Th. 4:16)**:**

The bodies of those New-Covenant saints who are yet alive in the flesh at that time will likewise be translated into immortal flesh:

> **"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"** (1Th.4:17).

Both groups of saints will then be caught up together as one to meet with Christ in the air as his true and completed Church.[642] This last event of the first resurrection period will also include all of those saints who will have died as martyrs during the intense tribulation period that had preceded it.[643]

> **"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"** (Re. 20:6).

Those who have taken part in the first resurrection are blessed and holy, and shall reign as a kingdom of priests before God and his Christ for a thousand years. The thousand years refers to the Millennial age on earth[644] that will be followed by the Eternal Ages of mankind in Heaven. They of the first resurrection will never need to stand before the Great White Throne to be judged along with those of the second resurrection. Therefore, they can never taste of the second death, which refers to the

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[642]cf. The Rapture of the Church is shown as "The harvest of the church," of which Christ was the firstfruits, in Illustration 11 on page 608.

[643]cf. The Great Tribulation Period, page 532.

[644]cf. Article; The Millennial Age on Earth, page 614.

eternal separation from God in Hell. That eternal death will only be experienced by the eternally lost following the second resurrection:

The Resurrection of the Eternally Lost

All men are born in a lost state before the Holy Spirit enters into the Elect of God. Thus, following this spiritual rebirth, many of the lost are no longer lost, for they have been redeemed and regenerated to take their place among the justified. There is, however, a great multitude of those who will remain in their lost state and are perpetually unjustified because they have not been regenerated through a spiritual rebirth from above (cf. Jn. 3:3-7).

Following the Millennial Age, a second and final resurrection will take place, as is shown above at the end of the timeline in Illustration 11. After Satan has been cast into the lake of fire and the Kingdom of Heaven is purged of all iniquity, the unjust of all the ages on earth must stand before a Great White Throne (cf. Re. 20:11) to receive from Christ the ultimate sentence of judgment regarding their final habitation throughout eternity.[645]

The books of their recorded deeds will be opened as well as the Lamb's Book of Life (Re. 20:12). All who have ever said that they could stand favorably before God by virtue of their own works will be given that opportunity, but the record of their deeds will only serve to determine their final punishment inasmuch as all of fallen men's works are as filthy rags before God (cf. Is. 64:6).

Even as the saved are to be rewarded for their deeds that were performed for Christ in this mortal life, the unsaved will be recompensed for every evil deed they have committed against Him without fail; the greater the sinful offense, the greater the punishment. The more they had benefited from their evil deeds, the more they must suffer loss. Nevertheless, even the foremost works of the reprobate will not prevent them from going into the place of eternal torment referred to in Holy Scrip-

[645]The judgment of the lost before the Great White Throne has been discussed in considerable detail within the Commentary on page 390.

ture as the "lake of fire," which is located in a vast desolate region of outer darkness.[646]

> **"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"** (Re.20:15).

The names of the eternally lost were not found written down in the Book of Life inasmuch as they had not believed in the Son of the living God in order to receive eternal life through and in Him (cf. Jn. 3:36). ■

[646]cf. Article on Hell located within this Addendum on page 646.

The Millennial Age on Earth

When the nation of Israel rejected and had then demanded the crucifixion of their Messiah, any hope of attaining enduring redemption through its sacrificial system, which had pointed to Him, left Israel desolate along with the Temple that had supported it. The Lord Jesus Christ would thereafter call out a peculiar people from among the Gentiles to be his personal possession, who would have his Name written upon them.[647] Jesus Christ had become a bright light to the entire Gentile world, while Israel who had rejected Him had fallen ever deeper into a self-imposed state of rabbinical darkness.

Nevertheless, Christ remained the light of eternal salvation for any individual person, both Gentile and Jew without distinction, who would call upon his name (cf. Ro.10:13). Although that invitation of salvation was made to the Jew first, of whom a small number had received Jesus as their Messiah, it was the Gentiles who received Him in great numbers. Those Gentiles ultimately comprised the New-Covenant Church, Christ Jesus' most prized personal possession as a pearl of great price, which He had purchased through much suffering (cf. Mt. 13:45,46).

In the prophecy of Hosea we read of Israel's devastating loss as a consequence of them having violently rejected their Messiah:[648]

> **"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and** *without* **teraphim"** (Ho. 3:4).

Throughout the many centuries that followed the Roman armies' destruction of the nation of Israel in AD 70, the unbelieving Jew has re-

[647]The Name by which Jesus' own are commonly called is "Christian" a contraction of "Christ-one;" that is, one who belongs to Christ. "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (cf. Ac.11:26).

[648]Although Hosea's prophecy has a local and immediate first reference, it also has a future second reference that is applicable to Israel as a consequence of their rejection of their Messiah (cf. Footnote 556 on page 529).

mained exiled and alienated from God. They are without a Temple in which to worship and enjoy fellowship with their God. They are also without even any ceremonial atonement for sin, which animal sacrifice within the Temple venue had once provided as an ephemeral covering for their continuing sin.[649]

The modern-day nation of Israel, founded in AD 1948, still has no King as of old. Israel's very last king was Zedekiah.[650] In 598 BC, he was forcibly removed by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who saw to it that there was no prince left in his line to replace him on the throne by brutally slaughtering all of them (cf. 2Ki. 25:1-7). Israel later rejected their true and ultimate King, the Messiah and incarnate Son of God, who had miraculously come to them through David's human lineage.

The *ephod* was a sacred vestment worn by the High Priest as he interceded for the twelve tribes of Israel before God in the Temple. However, no high priest presently exists to represent the Jew before God in a sanctified Temple upon the earth. Having rejected Christ as their true Great High Priest, the Jew has no advocate standing between themselves and God. Therefore, the Jew of today has no means of being reconciled with God, although they often seek that reconciliation with many tears.[651] Those "many days" following the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 up until the present, now encompasses a period of nearly two-thousand years during which time Israel continues to mourn their lonely spiritual exile from their God.

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[649]Unlike Jesus Christ, the "Lamb of God," who offered up his body once as a permanent atonement for all sin, the offering of lambs, bulls, and goats in the Temple needed to be repeatedly offered to temporally atone for the continuing sins of every individual Israelite.

[650] Since that date, Israel has had various ungodly puppet kings foisted upon them, but none were remotely related to the royal line of David – until their Messiah and true king had come; Jesus, the Christ, whom they had ignorantly rejected and had crucified by their Roman occupiers.

[651]Even Israel's superstitious household icons and images of healing (*teraphim*) are no more, for Israel had been totally purged of their earlier tendencies toward idolatry during the seventy-year long period of their Babylonian captivity.

Even so, in a future age, Israel's mourning will turn to singing (cf. Is. 51:11). For, this present age of abundant grace will one day come to an abrupt end with Christ's removal of his Church from the earth, and in its absence the divine law of God must prevail in full force until all of it will have been completely fulfilled according to His perfect will (cf. Mt.5:18). In that day, the "many days" of Israel's long exile will come to an end as Christ, their Messiah, returns again to establish the long-anticipated Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth.[652]

Those who will enter the Kingdom are uniquely blessed, as Jesus had described them in his Sermon on the Mount:

> **[3]"Blessed** *are* **the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [4]Blessed** *are* **they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. [5]Blessed** *are* **the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. [6]Blessed** *are* **they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. [7]Blessed** *are* **the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. [8]Blessed** *are* **the pure in heart: for they shall see God. [9]Blessed** *are* **the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. [10]Blessed** *are* **they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"** (Re.5:3-10).

This Kingdom Age will come about on earth following Christ's total decimation of decadent religious and commercial Babylon[653] and his ultimate victory over all remaining iniquity within the great war of Ar-

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[652]God had specifically promised this Kingdom to Israel, such that we find it being continually alluded to in the Old Testament. Jesus specifically referred to this promised kingdom as "the Kingdom of Heaven" 33 times in the New-Testament record of his words. This exacting term strongly implies that God's strict rule over Heaven will eventually be extended and ultimately manifested in an earthly Kingdom. Israel had forcibly rejected it when Christ, their Messiah, directly offered it to them (cf. Mt.3:2;4:17;5:3-20); nevertheless, God's unalterable promise will be ultimately fulfilled in the Millennium.

[653] cf. Destruction of Babylon's Religious Harlot, page 342 and Exposition of the Evils of Commercial Babylon, page 348.

mageddon.[654] As we earlier stated in our Commentary on the Revelation: "at long last, all opposition will have been put down by Christ, and the wondrous Kingdom Age will dawn as Jesus Christ, victorious in battle, takes his rightful place on the throne of the Earth as its "**King of Kings and Lord of Lords**" (cf. Re.17:14; 19:16; Commentary page 380).

We have discovered from our study of the text of Revelation Chapter 20, that the future Kingdom Age upon the earth will encompass a period of one-thousand years;[655] that is, one millennium.[656] During that period Satan will be incarcerated, such that he cannot continue to pursue his evil deception and seduction of the remaining Gentile nations.[657] In addition, we discovered that many martyred saints will live again and rule upon earth with Christ during that thousand-year period.[658] Other than that, surprisingly little is said in the Revelation concerning the status, governance, and living conditions of the people remaining upon the earth during the Millennial Age.

That is not to say that we know absolutely nothing about that future Kingdom Age; on the contrary, we know much about it through the written words of the Old-Testament prophets who within their ancient past saw the Millennium from afar. Isaiah in particular, who is often referred to as the "prince of the prophets," spoke longingly of this age; but also Ezekiel, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and still other prophets collectively prophesied and described the Kingdom Age in some detail. This coming Kingdom Age was, in fact, the ultimate overriding theme found within all of their many prophecies. We shall now summarize many of those

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[654]cf. The War of Armageddon, page 372.

[655]cf. Re. 20:1-6; Commentary page 380.

[656]By definition, a millennium is a span of one-thousand years. Therefore, this thousand-year Kingdom of Heaven on earth is commonly referred to as the Millennial Age or more simply the Millennium.

[657]cf. Re.20:1-3; Commentary page 382.

[658]cf. Re. 20:4; Commentary page 383.

prophecies in the text that follows in order to better understand this future coming age upon the earth.

Renovation of the Physical Earth

As the Millennial Age dawns, the earth will lay in shambles both politically and geologically. Due to the great devastation caused by the seven trumpet judgments and the seven bowls of God's wrath, which had resulted in the destruction of Babylon and her subordinate nations, ending in the great war of Armageddon, the earth's surface will have become a barren and desolate place unsuitable for human flourishing. The physical heavens, although having suffered a great celestial upheaval at the time of Christ's appearance, will likely appear much as they had before – consisting of the sun, the moon and distant stars.

Therefore, immediately upon his return to earth, The Lord Jesus Christ will undertake a great physical renovation of the earth's surface,[659] rapidly transforming it into an Edenic-like state of beauty, in preparation for the establishment of his Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

> **"In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth** *shall be* **excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel"** (Is. 4:2).

The "branch" (Hebrew, *tsemach*) of Jehovah literally means a "sprout." The reference here and in other places where various words are translated "BRANCH" refers to Jesus Christ, who is as a beautiful green sprout that has miraculously shot up out of the dry ground of Israel within his glorious resurrection.

> **"And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name** *is* **The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD"**

[659]The renovated earth's basic structure will likely remain much the same, but we speculate that it will most likely consist of but one interconnected landmass, containing many lakes and rivers, which is fully surrounded by a singular global ocean.

(Zec.6:12):

When Jesus Christ returns in the Millennium to "build the temple of the LORD,"[660] the earth will in like manner sprout up with excellent and comeliness to welcome back the redeemed of Israel.[661] We read about this great restoration of the earth in the prophecy of Isaiah through these words:

> **"[1]The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. [2]It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD,** *and* **the excellency of our God"** (Is. 35:1, 2).

The rich excellency of God will be seen upon the earth through his Christ who will make its wilderness and desert areas to bloom abundantly with rich vegetation and flowers. Both the wilderness and the uninhabited places will welcome the return of Israel. The desert will blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. This could mean that the desert will be heard through the singing of many birds that will have returned to the once barren land.

The glory of Lebanon had been realized in its lofty mountain vistas and great cedar trees. The excellency of Carmel (Heb. *Karmel* = "garden") was its lofty vistas overlooking abundant gardens of flowers, and Sharon (Heb. *shâârô n* = "plain") was noted for its beautiful and fruitful plain (cf. Song. 2:1). All of this great beauty will in that day be bestowed again upon the land of Israel.

> **"And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of**

[660]cf. The Millennial Temple, below on page 624, and Article, The Millennial Temple on page 636.

[661] The Elect of Israel are those that are truly of Israel – who carry within them the faithful seed of their father Abraham (cf. Ro.9:4-8), of whom it was said that he had "believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Ro.4:3; cf. Ga.3:6; James 2:23).

> **dragons, where each lay,** *shall be* **grass with reeds and rushes"** (Is. 35:7).

In the desert areas, where only jackals (Hebrew = *tan*) and various reptiles had survived, shall come forth vast grasslands populated with reed-lined pools filled with sparkling fresh water supplied from underground springs.

Resurrection of the Elect of Israel

This future Millennial age will be dominated by a Jewish Kingdom established within a fully restored theocratic nation of Israel, as God turns again to revive his people whom he foreknew. God will first reconstitute the bodies of many devout Jews from every age and generation of the nation of Israel from out of the dust of her present state of nonexistence within the "boneyard" of history.

The Old-Testament prophet Ezekiel was given a vision of this future resurrection of Israel (cf. Ez. 37:11), in which he was taken into a valley that was full of very dry human bones (cf. Ez.37:1,2).[662]

> **"And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.** (Ez. 37:3).

Ezekiel appeared to have been puzzled when God asked him, "Son of man, can these bones live?" The obvious answer would have been "no way;" however, Ezekiel knew that what seemed impossible to him was entirely possible with God; thus his reply, "O Lord GOD, thou knowest."

> **"[4]Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. [5]Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: [6]And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live;**

[662] cf. Newsletter Article February 2020.

and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD" (Ez. 37:4-6).

God spoke to those dry bones through Ezekiel, telling them that their bodies would be fully reconstituted and that the breath of life would enter them causing them to live again – in order that they would know with absolute certainty that He was truly Jehovah, their God.

> **"[7]So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. [8]And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but** *there was* **no breath in them"** (Ez. 37:7,8).

When Ezekiel prophesied as God had commanded, the bones began to shake and came together forming a skeletal structure; and then muscles and tendons formed upon the skeletal structure, and flesh and skin covered them. Nevertheless, there was as yet no life in them; they were as Adam when he was first formed from the dust of the ground before God had breathed the breath of life into him (cf. Ge. 2:7).

> **"[9]Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. [10]So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army"** (Ez. 37:9,10).

When Ezekiel prophesied to the wind, as God had directed, the breath of life entered their lifeless bodies. Here the wind is likened to the Spirit of God (cf. Jn.3:8), which had been at first breathed into Adam, and now enters into the inert bodies of those Jews who had been slain for their devout faith. Once the spirit of life entered them, they immediately stood upon their feet, and their number was as that of a mighty army.

> **"[11]Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our**

> **bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. [12]Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel"** (Ez. 37:11,12).

God explained to Ezekiel that those bones represent the whole house of Israel who have been scattered and cut off from their homeland like these dry bones within a dry valley of hopeless despair. God says to them, "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." Thus, in the Millennium, God will exhume the Elect of Israel from their ancient graves to live again within a resurrected nation of Israel.

The prophet Isaiah likewise prophesied concerning this future resurrection of Israel saying,

> **"Thy dead** *men* **shall live,** *together with* **my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew** *is as* **the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead"** (Is.26:19).

Even as Christ, their Messiah, arose bodily from the dead, Israel in that day will arise from out of the dust of the ground, as the earth casts out their dead bodies in great numbers to live again in concert with their Messiah.

> **"After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land** *that is* **brought back from the sword,** *and is* **gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them"** (Ez.38:8).

Thereupon, all of the Elect of Israel, whom God had foreknew as his own (cf. Ro. 9:6), will be gathered together in great numbers from the

ends of the earth to return to their homeland. In that day, the sons of Israel will come from afar out of many Gentile nations, where they had once resided as sojourners; and her daughters will return with them to be nurtured in their own native land (cf. Is. 49:22). Thus the theocratic nation of Israel will be fully restored under the direct rule of their Messiah. They will live on earth in peace and prosperity with Him for a thousand years.

Again, Isaiah prophesied regarding this future resurrection of Israel with these words,

> **"[11]And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. [12]And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth"** (Is. 11:11,12).

Here in verse 11 along with many others we consistently find the prophets of old using the term "in that day" to indicate the Millennial Kingdom Age. Therefore, this prophecy does not in any way describe the current *Aliyah*[663] movement, which has resulted in the political restoration and growth of the present-day nation of Israel; inasmuch as their ensign, their Messiah, has not yet appeared to them as a clear sign to the nations of their return. This text clearly speaks of a yet-approaching day when there will be a gathering of redeemed Jews into a fully restored theocratic nation of Israel. The throne of this restored theocratic kingdom will be occupied by their Messiah within a beautifully renovated city of Jerusalem.

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[663] i.e."right of return;" a law established by Israel on July 5, 1950, which states that every Jew on earth has a right to return to the land of Israel to live and be granted full citizenship.

The Millennial Temple

At the very beginning of this thousand-year period, the Lord Jesus Christ will build an entirely new Temple and surrounding complex within that beautifully restored city of Jerusalem. This Temple will be the culmination of all the earlier earthly Temples as to its glory and beauty. Unlike earlier Temples, this will be a Temple of peace for all of the nations upon the earth; for Christ, the Prince of Peace, shall take up residence within it to govern the nations in perfect righteousness.

> **"The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts"** (Hag.2:9).

This novel Temple complex was revealed to the prophet Ezekiel in a vision, which he recorded in exhaustive detail. (cf. Ezekiel Chapters 40-43). We have discussed the construction of this Temple at some length in a separate Article entitled The Millennial Temple, on page 636 of this Addendum. For that reason, we shall not comment further on its construction here, except to say that it will be magnificent and similar, yet in various other ways unlike, all other previously-built Temples on the earth.

Re-institution of the Mosaic System

Along with the construction of the Millennial Temple, the Mosaic system will be fully restored to Israel during the Millennium – including the reestablishment of blood sacrifice of animals through the reinstatement of the Levitical liturgy, consisting of the burnt offering, sin offering, and trespass offering. This becomes quite evident in Ezekiel Chapters 39-42; and that strict ritual practice is detailed in Chapters 43-46 of his prophecy.[664]

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[664] While this re-institution of the Mosaic System may seem highly problematic for Christians living in this current age of grace, and rightly so, it must be understood that this current age will have come to an end with the Rapture of the Church, thus leaving God's perfect Law to prevail in full force within the Kingdom of Heaven on earth during the Millennial Age.

The purpose of the Mosaic ceremonial system of old was prophetic in nature, pointing by type and example to the coming Messiah and his sacrificial death. Even after Christ had suffered death on the cross and had offered up his own blood for the sins of the world, many Jews had in their ignorance continued to believe that the blood of animals could actually provide atonement for sin, while it had only served to point them to the all-sufficient blood of Christ.

For that reason, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews severely warned Jewish Christians against continuing on in the ritual practice of animal sacrifice in the Temple, for in doing so they were devaluing the precious blood of Christ as being less than that of a slain animal – in which God took no pleasure. Only the blood of the body of the Son of God, could suffice to fully and finally atone for mankind's sin,

> **"[4]For** *it is* **not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. [5]Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: [6]In burnt offerings and** *sacrifices* **for sin thou hast had no pleasure"** (He.10:4-6).

The purpose for the restoration of the Mosaic system in the Millennium will not be for atonement nor will it be prophetic, but instead it will be memorial in nature; for in that day, Jesus Christ will be living among them as their Great King upon the throne of David in the fully restored Jerusalem. Thus, Jews living in that future age will look back in time to the blood sacrifice of their Messiah, Jesus Christ, whose death they had ignorantly demanded. With Jesus on the throne, the rigorous ritual activity taking place within the Millennial Temple by those future Jews will fully open their eyes to the superior redemptive quality of the blood sacrifice of Jesus, their Messiah over that of mere animals.

> **"And he shall sit** *as* **a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness"** (Mal.3:3).

The Millennial Temple and its environs will serve as an institute of learning to instruct Israel and Gentile nations alike how to properly walk in willing compliance with God's ways and to conform them to his divine laws that will be stringently enforced during that age and throughout the eternal ages to come. This great Temple had been foreseen earlier by the prophet Isaiah as the Lord's house in which He will teach all peoples of his ways:

> **"[2]And it shall come to pass in the last days,** *that* **the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. [3]And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem"** (Is.2:2,3; cf. Mi. 4:1-5).

The Glory of Israel to be Restored

After the many years of her exile will have been accomplished, Israel will once again return to their Land, but this time not merely to seek a homeland as before, but to seek the Lord their God:[665]

> **"Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days"** (Ho. 3:5).

In that day, Israel will reverence God and the goodness He extended toward them by miraculously gathering and returning them to their land.

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[665] The earlier Zionist movement has resulted in the establishment of the political nation of Israel in AD 1948, yet it presently remains largely occupied by Gentiles of every kind, even as many Jews remain scattered abroad over the earth. In the Millennium, Christ, their Messiah, will call forth every genuine Jew out of every nation from the four corners of the earth to return to their homeland to establish his theocratic Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth.

Having done so, they will seek out David, their royal king of old to resume his rule in the Kingdom Age.[666]

In the Millennium, the *Shekinah* glory of Israel will return in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and He will be fully acknowledged by Israel as their Messiah.

> **"[3]And it shall come to pass,** *that he that is* **left in Zion, and** *he that* **remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy,** *even* **every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: [4]When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning"** (Is. 4:3,4).

All those who are alive in Israel in that day will be the Elect of God's chosen people. This great number will include the 144,000 sealed Jews that had remained in Israel as a witness of Him when the Antichrist had openly revealed himself as Satan; as well as a great number that had heeded their witness. They will be declared holy, for the Lord has washed them of their sins through his blood. He has purged them of the guilt of the cross "by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning;" that is, the burning away of the guilt that the Jew had long suffered because of Him and for Him.

> **"And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory** *shall be* **a defence"** (Is. 4:5).

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[666] Some believe that David will be resurrected to occupy the throne as Christ's vice-regent, and that Christ will rule through him (cf. Re.20:4). Others believe that the throne will be personally occupied by Jesus Christ, the greater son of David after the flesh (cf. Mt.1:1; Ro. 1:3). Regardless of which view one chooses to take, it will be Jesus Christ who ultimately rules in Israel over the entire earth during the Millennium.

The *Shekinah* glory will thus be restored to Israel within the person of Christ, who will guide them day and night. He will be present in every dwelling place and be seen in all her assemblies as "a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night" (cf. Ex. 13:21). He will be for them a chamber of safety and defense; Israel in that day will at last know perfect peace, for they will then fully embrace their Messiah and shall greatly desire to walk in his ways:

> **"And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain"** (Is. 4:6).

They shall find their refuge in Christ, their Messiah, as an overshadowing dwelling-place (i.e. a tabernacle), as shade to rest from the laborious activities and the heat of each day, as well as a place of comfort for them to weather every sadness and the many other storms that they must encounter in their mortal lives.

Israel to be Honored by the Gentile Nations

After having rejected their Messiah, Israel has been considered an outcast and totally forsaken by God, and she has been despised more than any other nation in the world. In AD 70, her land was totally decimated by the Roman armies, after which no man desired to pass through that haunted desolate wasteland. The surviving exiled Jews and their descendants have long been persecuted as undesirable wayward wanderers within the Gentile nations of the world as they sought a safe place to live outside their land. The reestablishment of the political nation of Israel in 1948, as a homeland for them, had only exacerbated that hatred and persecution through the increased fanatic antisemitism of her Arab-Islamic neighbors.

> **"[15]Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through *thee*, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. [16]Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD**

> *am* **thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. [17]For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. [18]Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise"** (Is.60:15-18).

In the Millennium, Israel will be viewed by Gentile nations as "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations," inasmuch as it will have become the capitol city of the world. In that day, Israel will fully know God as their Savior and Redeemer, for their Messiah, Jesus Christ, will establish his throne there. No longer will any violence be seen in her streets. No longer will Israel see the walls of their city as necessary for protection, but as beautiful walls of salvation. She will no longer view her gates as a way to shut out an enemy, but left wide-open as gates of praise; for where before nations had pillaged her, they will in that day return the spoil taken from her many times over as they nurture her with their wealth and praise.

Population Explosion during the Millennium

During the Millennium, the earth will experience a great population increase due to a total lack of war and personal violence; ideal living conditions within an ideal environment; a total lack of disease and pandemics; a greatly increased birthrate with a total absence of infant death; and a certified longevity of life of at least one century for every man, woman, and child:

> **"[19]And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. [20]There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner** *being* **an hundred**

years old shall be accursed" (Is. 65:19,20).

This verse specifically speaks of God's people, Israel, but it can be generally applied to all who live on earth during the Millennium. Even in that age, children born to mortal men and women upon the earth will still inherit the Adamic sin-nature, such that the curse of death will yet reign within their mortal bodies. However, disease will have been totally eliminated, and "accidental death" will no more occur, such that the individual mortal lifespan granted every man, woman and child will be at least 100 years – at which time, their aging bodies must ultimately succumb to Adam's ancient curse that remains within their flesh.[667] Therefore, a sinner who reaches his centennial age will be accursed.

> **"[21]And they shall build houses, and inhabit** *them;* **and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. [22]They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree** *are* **the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands"** (Is. 65:21,22)**.**

In that day the homes and lands of the people will be secure. No more will an enemy invade Israel to destroy her crops, take spoils of her land, injure and kill them, or ever again drive them out of their land.

> **They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they** *are* **the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them"** (Is.65:23).

Jesus Christ's Authority Over the Nations

During the Millennial Age, Jesus, the Messiah, will strictly rule over the nations of the earth with a "rod of iron," which enforces the spoken

[667]To sin with knowledge is far worse than sinning from a state of ignorance. Whereas Adam lived for 930 years upon the earth, many of those who had emulated and multiplied his sinful act suffered death much sooner, falling to a generally allotted lifespan of 70 years or less, because they had sinned with greater prior knowledge of their offense. Only after the Millennium comes to an end will the curse of death be totally destroyed, along with the iniquity that had mandated it. (cf. Death and Hades Cast into the Lake of Fire, on page 396 of the Commentary).

commands of his mouth,[668] and none will or can withstand Him. As we read in Psalm 2,

> **"[10]Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. [11]Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. [12]Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish** *from* **the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed** *are* **all they that put their trust in him"** (Ps. 2:10-12).

The mortal rulers of the Gentile nations on earth will be on "tender-hooks" lest they engage in cross purposes with the Messiah who rules over them in absolute righteousness and is both omniscient and omnipotent. Submission to Him is their only safe choice, but blessed are those that willingly submit and place their trust in Him.

> **"[2]And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; [3]And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: [4]But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. [5]And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins"** (Is.11:2-5).

The Holy Spirit will fully indwell Jesus, the Messiah (cf. Mt.3:16; Mk.1:10; Lu.3:22). Thus, He will judge the poor and the meek with righteous knowledge and compassion, while the wicked that would dare oppose Him will be slayed with the very breath of his lips.

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[668]cf. Is. 11:4; Ps. 2:9; Re.2:27; 19:15.

Universal Peace on Earth

> **"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"** (Is.2:4).

During this era, the Messiah will be the sole arbiter to mediate any and all disputes that may arise between nations. His judgment will be clear and final without any remaining unresolved conflicts. Thus, the nations will not need to study and learn how to wage war against each other anymore for their protection. Great industries that had previously produced weapons of war, will be transformed to manufacture products of agriculture that will be in very high demand as the earth's population rapidly expands.

> **"And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and** *with* **the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely"** (Ho.2:18).

In that day, universal peace also will be extended to the animal kingdoms such that they and mankind will comfortably coexist and live together in perfect companionship, as we find in Isaiah's prophecy:

> **"[6]The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. [7]And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. [8]And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. [9]They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the**

earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11:6-9; cf. Is. 65:25).

In the world prior to the great flood of Noah's Day, Adam and his descendants had lived peacefully and without fear with the animal populations of the world. Following the great flood, the initial lack of vegetation turned animals into carnivorous creatures that devoured each other for survival and dominance. Therefore, for the very first time, God gave mankind a directive to eat animal flesh, thus setting man and the animal kingdoms in direct opposition to each other.

In the Millennium, peace will be restored within the animal kingdom, which shall then also be at peace with man. Mankind will return to their previous state as vegetarians to enjoy the abundant fruit of the land. Likewise, animals will no longer hunt and kill each other to survive, but will peacefully feed upon the vast amount of vegetation that will cover the earth. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

The Millennial Age Comes to a Close

As a thousand years will have passed by and the Millennial Age draws to a close, the earth will have by that time become very heavily populated.[669] Those who had initially entered the Kingdom on earth will have been replaced with many generations of their offspring as they and earlier generations had peacefully left the earth through natural death.

The nations of the earth had greatly prospered under the benevolent authority of Christ and the subordinate rule of his glorified resurrected saints (cf. Re.20:4). Nevertheless, beneath the surface, the inherent sin-nature of mankind had remained and had festered within various Gentile nations. Even so, it had been held in check by the strict benevolent rule

[669] It can be reasonably estimated that the earth's population near the end of the Millennium could easily number well into the trillions, whereas the world population as this book is being written is just now approaching 8 billion.

of Christ, such that there had been no motivation or opportunity for rebellion to take place.

Satan Released to Deceive the Nations

The time for instruction, testing, and preparation finally draws to an end, and now must come the ultimate test. Turning again to the text of the Revelation, we read,

> **"[7]And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, [8]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"** (Re. 20:7,8).

When Satan had approached Adam through Eve, he had exploited their initial state of innocence to readily deceive them. The Gentile nations of the world during the Millennial Age will not in any way be innocent; for, they will have received instruction and amassed great knowledge of God and his ways over that thousand-year period. Incredibly, the atheistic nations of Magog[670] will still choose to swallow the lies of Satan in the mendacious assumption that due to their vast numbers they can successfully go up against God and his Anointed King, the Lord Jesus Christ, who occupies the throne in the city of Jerusalem. The absurdity of this egotistic notion was expressed in the words of the psalmist as follows,

> **"[1]Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? [2]The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*, [3]Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us"** (Ps. 2:1-3).

The unrighteous anger directed against God in today's world, evil though it may be, will be as nothing when compared to the satanic re-

[670]cf. Commentary, The Final Uprising of Atheism: Gog and Magog, page 386.

bellious anger that many nations will direct against Him in that future day.

Mankind's Final Rebellion

In the Millennium, all will know God and will fully understand the deadly consequences of sin. Even so, Satan will have taken advantage of their old fallen nature to force a final willful rebellion against Christ's divine and perfect right to rule over them.

> **"And [Satan] 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"** (Re.20:8).

Inspired by Satan, the atheistic nations of the north will advance upon Israel as a great angry mob in an attempt to besiege and ultimately destroy her.

> **"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"** (Re. 20:9).

For that deliberate rebellious act, God will immediately send fire down from out of Heaven to devour them all;[671] and Satan will be cast into the eternal lake of fire within outer darkness, never to be seen or heard from again.[672] We note that there is no process here; in that day, God's retribution will be immediate, thorough, and final.

Those who will remain upon the earth at the conclusion of this final judgment consists of the faithful Elect of Israel and a large remnant of elect Gentiles from those nations that had refused to follow Satan in this final act of rebellion. Those elect nations will be permitted to enter into the eternal realm of Heaven, as the Millennial Age on earth finally comes to a close and the vast Eternal Ages lay immediately ahead. ■

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[671]cf. The Final Uprising of Atheism: Gog and Magog, Commentary page 386.

[672]cf. Re. 20:10.

The Millennial Temple

In this Article, we shall undertake a cursory analysis of the text of the prophecy of Ezekiel in which the physical attributes of a future Millennial Temple complex was revealed to him by God in a vision. Ezekiel's description of the Millennial Temple and its environs found in Ezekiel Chapters 40 thru 43 is so detailed and extensive that we shall only attempt to highlight its main attributes in this brief article.

The dimensions of the Millennial Temple complex will differ from that of any of the other Temple compounds previously built upon the earth. Moreover, numerous semblances and parallels can be found between this future Millennial complex on earth and the New Jerusalem of the Eternal Ages (cf. Re. 21:9 thru Re. 22:5). While this text in the prophecy of Ezekiel unquestionably refers to the Millennial Temple, it is also a foreshadow of the New Jerusalem (cf. Re. 21:2), which God will establish above a New earth in the Eternal Ages to come.

In the Millennium, this massive city of the house of the LORD will be built on the top of a high mountain upon the earth, as was envisioned by both the Prophet Isaiah and the prophet Micah:

> **And it shall come to pass in the last days,** *that* **the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it** (Is.2:2; cf. Mi.4:1).

The house of the Lord will be in Jerusalem, the capital city of the entire earth, such that all of the nations on earth will highly exalt it. The Law of God will flow out of it to govern the earth, and the people of the nations will enter in to it to seek the Lord's countenance and council in order to learn of Him and to walk in his ways, as we discussed in our Article on the Millennial Age on page 614.

With that brief introduction, we shall now undertake a cursory exposition of the text of Ezekiel's prophecy beginning in Chapter 40.

"[1]In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the

> **beginning of the year, in the tenth** *day* **of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither. [2]In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which** *was* **as the frame of a city on the south"** (Ez.40:1,2).

Ezekiel received this vision of a new Temple complex some twenty-five years after Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed and a host of God's people in Israel had been taken away captive into Babylon. Here he says that he was carried forth in the "visions of God;" from that, we must assume he was not physically transported but was spiritually transported as would be the Apostle John at a much later time (cf. Re. 4:2; Commentary page 89).

Ezekiel was returned in the spirit to the land of Israel and was set upon a high mountain upon which he saw an outline of a great city before him to the south (cf. Illustration 12 below). This "very high mountain" is highly suggestive of the "great high mountain" upon which the Apostle John was transported in a vision to view the New Eternal Jerusalem descending out of Heaven (cf. Re. 21:10; Commentary page 399).

The Man of Brass

> **"And he brought me thither, and, behold,** *there was* **a man, whose appearance** *was* **like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate."** (Ez.40:3).

This man "whose appearance was like the appearance of brass" is evidently a Heavenly escort – much like the angel that would centuries later be sent to escort John the Apostle to measure and establish a perspective of the New Jerusalem as the "lamb's wife" (cf. Re. 21:9). However, this was not an angel that Ezekiel encountered, but a man (Hebrew, *'ı̂ysh*) who resolutely stood in the gate of a great structural complex. His

brassy appearance suggests his boldness as he aggressively went about measuring everything he encountered. This man held a reed in his hand to measure short distances and also a line of flax that could be utilized along with the reed to measure much greater distances. As the man plumbed various objects and measured the distances between them, Ezekiel recorded those precise lengths in his written prophecy.

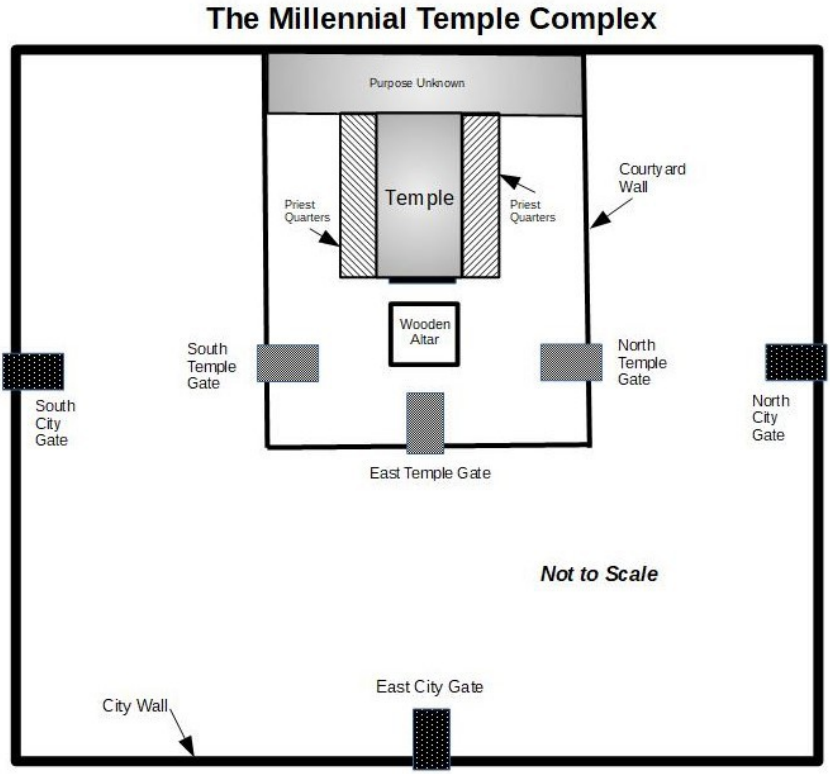

Illustration 12: The Millennial Temple Complex

Dimensions of the Temple Complex

Physical dimensions throughout this ancient text are given in cubits and "reeds." A cubit is commonly defined as the length of a man's arm measured from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger. This length is considered to be around 18 inches [46cm][673] today, but due to the varying stature of men living within various locations upon the earth throughout diverse periods of history,[674] it could have been as long as 21 inches [53cm]. Hence, it is impossible to be dogmatic concerning the length of a cubit found in this text. Nevertheless, we must standardize this measurement in order to gain a reasonably consistent idea of the shape and size of the Temple and its surrounding complex. We have arbitrarily chosen a cubit varying in length from 20 to 21 inches [51 to 53cm], because it can be assumed to be more accurate for the taller stature and longer arms of men in Ezekiel's day.[675]

> **"And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits** *long* **by the cubit and an hand breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed** (Ez. 40:5).

Ezekiel gives us the length of this reed as being 6 cubits. Therefore, by simple calculation the "reed" may have been anywhere between 10 to 10.5 feet [3m] long. The Temple proper is commonly referred to as the "house" throughout this text. The word "building" found here does not refer to the house, but to the construction of the wall surrounding it, which measured approximately 10ft [3m] thick by 10 ft [3m] high.

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[673]We have inserted approximate metric equivalents in square brackets throughout this text to aid those who may not be familiar with the English system of measurements.

[674]cf. Ge.6:4; De.2:11; etc.

[675]This slight variation of an inch [2.54cm] will be evidenced in various calculations of English lengths found within this discussion. Therefore, it is impossible to be dogmatic about any precise measurements assumed through this calculus.

Perimeter Walls of the Temple Complex

The Temple complex will have both an outer perimeter wall as well as an inner wall that encloses the house of the Temple proper as is shown in the simple illustration above, which it is important to note is not to scale. The outer perimeter wall surrounding the entire temple complex also measured 10 feet [3m] high and 10 feet [3m] wide by the "man of brass." "Its length as is given in Ez. 42:16-20, totals about four miles: approximately one mile (i.e. 500 reeds = 5250 feet [1.6km]) on each of four equal sides of the city enclosure."[676] Therefore, we find that the entire Temple complex will encompass an area of roughly one square mile [2.56km^2].

This large square enclosure will be located upon the flat surface of a high mountain (cf. Ez. 40:2). A flat mountain top with this area does not presently exist anywhere within the land of Israel.[677] However, we can assume that the topography of the land of Israel will have been greatly altered at the beginning of the Millennium (cf. Zec.14:4,5).

Gates of the City

The outer wall of the complex will have three gates; each of which is located on the north, east, and south walls. There is no western gate into the complex; inasmuch as the area of the western wall where such a gate could be expected is occupied by a large rectangular building[678] – whose purpose is not stated in Ezekiel's prophecy.[679]

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[676]It should be noted that a 20 inch cubit would result in a length of 5000 feet, while the 5250 feet given here is arbitrarily based upon a 21 inch cubit.

[677]We must note that a Temple complex of this size could not possibly fit upon the current 34-acre [138 thousand m^2] "Temple Mount" located just north of the old city of Jerusalem, inasmuch as one square mile encompasses 640 acres [2.6 million m^2].

[678] cf. Illustration 12 on page 638

[679]We speculate that this large building could constitute a great institute, a school of learning, to prepare Jews for service in the Temple and to instruct Gentiles how to properly walk in the way of the Lord.

The three "gates" into the city are actually massive gateways all of which are identical in construction; each making up a rather complex structure in themselves. The dimensions of each gateway measures about 38 ft [11.6m] wide and they extend inward some 75 feet [23m] through the perimeter wall into the outer area of the complex. Located within each gateway are six chambers of equal size. These chambers are placed three on either side of a central walkway that runs throughout the length of the gateway:

> **"And** *every* **little chamber** *was* **one reed long, and one reed broad; and between the little chambers** *were* **five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate within** *was* **one reed"** (Ez.40:7).

Each of these little chambers are square measuring about 10 feet by 10 feet, and the space separating them is about 5 feet [1.5m]. A threshold placed across the entrance of each of these gateways is about 10 feet wide, and a similar threshold is also placed at the inner-most end of each gateway

> **"And the little chambers of the gate eastward** *were* **three on this side, and three on that side; they three** *were* **of one measure: and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side"** (Ez. 40:10):

Three chambers were on one side and three on the opposite side within the gateway.

Ezekiel also speaks of stone tables placed upon the broad porch at the gateways placed for the purpose of slaying sacrificial animals:

> **"[39]And in the porch of the gate** *were* **two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to slay thereon the burnt offering and the sin offering and the trespass offering. [40]And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north gate,** *were* **two tables; and on the other side, which *was* at the porch of the gate,** *were* **two tables. [41]Four tables** *were* **on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables,**

> **whereupon they slew** *their sacrifices.* **[42]And the four tables** *were* **of hewn stone for the burnt offering, of a cubit and an half long, and a cubit and an half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt offering and the sacrifice. [43]And within** *were* **hooks, an hand broad, fastened round about: and upon the tables** *was* **the flesh of the offering"** (Ez. 40:39-43).

The Inner Courtyard

Another wall surrounding the inner court also have three gateways that are similar but not identical in construction and size to the gateways of the outer wall. These are most likely located in-line with the outer-wall gateways on the north, east, and south of the inner court as shown in Illustration 12, on page 638; but due to the fact that the Temple is shown greatly enlarged in the illustration, the north and south outer gateways are not centered within their walls as shown, but are actually located much closer to the western wall.

> **"So he measured the court, an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad, foursquare; and the altar** *that was* **before the house"** (Ez 40:47).

The inner court itself as measured by the "man of brass" was approximately 175 feet by 175 feet [53m x 53m] square before the house of the Temple.

The Altar of Incense

Central to this inner court stands a wooden altar by which one must pass by to enter into the house of the Temple proper:

> **"The altar of wood** *was* **three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof,** *were* **of wood: and he said unto me, This** *is* **the table that** *is* **before the LORD"** (Ez.41:22).

This altar measured about 5 foot [1.5m] high and around 40 to 45 inches square [1m^2]. This is apparently the altar of incense, for its dimensions are much smaller than the altar of sacrifice given in Ez. 43:13-18. This small wooden altar is referred to as the "table set before the LORD" – from which He receives prayer and praise from his people.

The House of the Temple

Ten stairs, which measure about twenty feet [6m]wide, lead upward from the inner court toward the entrance to the Temple proper, which dominates the western edge of the inner court. The stairs immediately lead up onto a wide porch that measures some 30 feet [9m] wide, and which extends about 18 feet [5.5m] inward toward the Temple entrance.

The massive outer walls of the Temple itself were measured as being around nine feet [3m] thick. This house is divided into an outer chamber measuring 30 by 60 feet [9m x 18m] and an inner chamber measuring about 30 foot [9m] square, which is referred to by Ezekiel's escort as the "Most Holy Place" (cf. Ez. 41:4). The entrance from the porch into the outer chamber is defined by two massive doorposts that measure about seven and one-half feet [2.5m] high, and the width of the entrance measures about 15 feet [4.5m]. The entrances to both the outer and inner sanctuaries are fitted with double doors each hinged with two leaves (cf. Ez. 41:23,24). Those doors apparently replace the outer curtain separating the outer Temple from the inner court, as well as the heavy veil that had separated the inner court from the Holy of Holies, as were found in the wilderness tabernacle and previous Temples.

Quarters for Priests and Servants

On either side of the Temple are quarters for the priests who serve in the Temple: the quarters on the south are for those who maintain the Temple, and those on the north are for the sons of Zadok who are in charge of the altar, and for the Levites who directly minister to God in the Temple (cf. Ez.40:45,46).

The Brazen Altar of Sacrifice

Inasmuch as the Altar of Incense was described and measured earlier,[680] we must assume that this much larger altar is the Altar of Sacrifice that was located outside in the forecourt of the Tabernacle (cf. Exodus 27:1–8; 38:1–7). This Altar, also known as the Brazen Altar was made of acacia wood that was overlaid inside by heavy bronze, which was packed in with dirt to dissipate the intense heat radiating from the burning sacrifices.

> **"And these** *are* **the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit** *is* **a cubit and an hand breadth; even the bottom** *shall be* **a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about** *shall be* **a span: and this** *shall be* **the higher place of the altar"** (Ez. 43.13).

Here we are informed that the cubit that is used to measure this altar is one cubit plus one hand breath of about 4 to 5 inches (10-12cm). We have before determined that the length of a cubit could be anywhere between 18 and 21 inches. Therefore, this "long cubit" could measure anywhere between 18+4= 22 to 21+5 = 26 inches. Purely for the sake of convenience, we shall assume that this "long cubit" is 24 inches (abt. 61cm) when converting the measurements given for the Altar in this text into units of English measurements.

The "span" mentioned here in this verse refers to the spread of a man's fingers which would be somewhere around 9 to 10 inches. Therefore, the trim extending around the top part of the Altar is about 10 inches (25cm) in width.

> **[14]"And from the bottom** *upon* **the ground** *even* **to the lower settle** *shall be* **two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser settle** *even* **to the greater settle** *shall be* **four cubits, and the breadth** *one* **cubit. [15]So the altar** *shall be* **four cubits; and from the altar and upward** *shall be* **four horns** (Ez.43:14,15).

[680] cf. The Altar of Incense, page 642.

The two verses above describe the vertical aspect of the Altar while verses 16 and 17 below describe the horizontal aspect. A “settle” is a surround or a border. Therefore, two cubits (i.e. 48 inches/122cm) from the ground runs a lesser horizontal border that measures one cubit wide (i.e. 24 inches). Four cubits (i.e. 96 inches/244cm) upward from the ground is a greater horizontal suround that is also one cubit (i.e. 24 inches) wide. Therefore, the Altar is four cubits i.e. about 96 inches high. Attached to the four corners of the Altar are four stone pillars carved with hooks or “horns” that extend upward from the altar to which the animal sacrifice is tied down.

> [16]**“And the altar** *shall be* **twelve** *cubits* **long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof.** [17]**And the settle** *shall be* **fourteen** *cubits* **long and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof; and the border about it** *shall be* **half a cubit; and the bottom thereof** *shall be* **a cubit about; and his stairs shall look toward the east”** (Ez. 43:16,17).

The Altar measures 12 cubits (i.e. 24 feet/7.3m) long and 12 cubits (i.e. 24 feet) wide thus forming a geometric square. The greater border at the top forms a 24-inch-wide "catwalk" surrounding the top of the Altar that is 14 cubits (28ft) long and 14 cubits wide that also has a twelve-inch border around it. At the eastern side of the Altar are stairs leading up to the surrounding walkway. ■

Hell

The intent of this Article is to disclose Hell's purpose and function within the overall plan of God to rid his domain of Satan's iniquity, which presently runs rampant throughout his created universe.[681] In doing so, we shall provide a forthright definition of this place called Hell as well as set forth a candid discussion of its properties – as much as a candid discussion of Hell is at all possible. Indeed, this is not a pleasant subject to contemplate; although, it is an exceedingly important one, since a far greater number of mankind will experience the direful terrors of Hell than are those who will enjoy the glorious wonders of Heaven.

For that reason, it is appropriate that we first gain a basic understanding of this dreaded place called Hell[682] before we can hope to properly appreciate the wondrous properties of Heaven. Accordingly, we find that Scripture at large has considerably more to say about the harsh realities of Hell than it does about the great attributes of Heaven. We find that Jesus also had considerably more to say about Hell than He did about Heaven.

Hell Defined

Before defining Hell, it is important that we first differentiate Hell from the place of anguish within *Sheol* in the Hebrew or *Hades* in the Greek, which defines an intermediate place[683] that temporarily holds the

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[681]cf. Article, The Mystery of Iniquity, page 569.

[682]While the extended comments in this article concerning Hell are those of this author, it should be understood that they have been influenced to some extent by the teaching of others, and in particular by the writings of a prominent eighteenth-century American theologian by the name of Jonathan Edwards, who exposited at length upon Heaven – but more especially so upon the terrors that unrepentant sinners would experience in Hell: cf. Sermon: *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, Jonathan Edwards, AD 1741.

[683]cf. Article The Intermediate State of the Dead on page 600.

souls of the reprobate, as they await their final judgment before the Great White Throne.[684] It is most unfortunate that the Greek word *Hades* has been erroneously translated "Hell" in the *AKJV* as well as within various other English translations of the Bible, resulting in confusion concerning those two places.

The English word "Hell" is translated from the Greek word *gehenna*,[685] which in Jesus' day had specifically defined a great burning refuse dump located within the Hinnom valley adjacent to the city of Jerusalem, wherein it continually burned with fire day and night. Everything that was worthless was eventually cast away into this great inferno of *gehenna* to be consumed. Even the bodies of men and women who were not deemed worthy of proper burial were commonly thrown into this fiery place. This waste dump was also infested with a worm that lived below the burning refuse that the fire never reached, such that the worms never died even as they continuously worked to consume the garbage from below (cf. Mk.9:44).

The Lake of Fire

Hell is described in Scripture as a "lake of fire and brimstone" (i.e. a reservoir of burning Sulfur) in which the reprobate outcast must endure the most severe physical pain possible in their resurrected bodies; and wherein the voracious "worm" of their perverted being will never die, but will continue to feed upon their terrible iniquity (cf. Mk.9:44,46,48).

The Greek word translated fire or fiery is *poor*, which can be variously interpreted literally or figuratively. As frightening as the prospect of incredible pain that a literal fire would imply, fire is most likely but a metaphor for something that is exceedingly more intense and painful than literal fire. It could very well refer to the righteous anger of God's eternal wrath that awaits all of the reprobate in Hell, for it is said that "our God is a consuming fire" (He. 12:29).

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[684]cf. The Great White Throne Judgment, Commentary page 390.

[685]cf. Mt. 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 23:15; Lu.12:5 etc.

The Location of Hell

In the past, some men have believed that Hell was located within the fiery center of the earth,[686] while many today contemplate that it is on some distant planet in the far outer reaches of the physical universe. Of course, both views are mere speculation. Hell is often referred to in Scripture as a place that is located within an infinite region of "outer darkness," a pitch-black and lonely region that is outside the great sphere of Heaven, beyond which the light of God and his Son does not extend.

The fact is that Hell may not yet exist – or if it does, it is currently void of any habitation in this present age. Scripture informs us that the very first occupants of Hell will be the Antichrist and the False Prophet[687] at the very beginning of the Millennial Age.[688] Then, as the Millennial Age comes to an end, Satan will be cast into Hell as well (cf. Re. 20:10). Only then will the reprobate souls of men, which are currently incarcerated in *Hades,* be resurrected in their corrupted bodies, judged according to their sinful works, and then they also will be cast away into Hell – into the very company of this enraged satanic troika (cf. Re.20:11-15).

[686]Perhaps this false assumption comes from the fact that Scripture speaks of Satan's Demons that are sealed up in a deep pit near the fiery center of the earth, the shaft and sealed mouth of which appears to be located somewhere upon the earth (cf. Re. 9:1-3; Commentary page 235). Nevertheless, Scripture never states that men are ever to be incarcerated within this "bottomless pit."

[687]cf. Re. 19:20; Commentary page 375.

[688]cf. Article The Millennial Age on Earth, page 614.

The Second Death

Entering into this frightful place called Hell constitutes a second death much more to be feared than the first. In the words of Jesus, "... fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt. 10:28).

> **"[14]And death and [*Hades*] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. [15]And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"** (Re.20:14,15).

Having fulfilled their purpose, both death and the grave (i.e. *Hades*) will be cast into the lake of fire as Hell is opened. Then, whosoever was not found written in the book of life was likewise cast into the lake of fire. As we read above in verse 14, the lake of "fire and brimstone" is referred to as the second death. This second death, or eternal death, differs greatly from physical death, which is the separation of the immortal spirit and soul from the mortal body. The separation of the first death is temporary, awaiting the future resurrection of the body. In comparison, the second death, is described as an everlasting separation of both body and soul from the presence of God along with all his many blessings and benefits without which man is bereft of all that is good and beneficial to life (cf Ja. 1:17).

Hell as a Necessary Place

In order for there to be an eternal Heaven for the redeemed, it is absolutely necessary that there be a corresponding separate place of eternal habitation for the reprobate who would immediately pollute and infest Heaven with unrighteousness through their very presence should they be allowed entry. These who are referred to as reprobate are those whom God has abandoned as nonredeemable because they have stubbornly refused to repent of their sins even as God has extended his grace toward them through Jesus Christ. Scripture clearly warns men that any and all sins that are not atoned for by the blood of Christ must lead to a perma-

nent expulsion from God's holy presence and thus from his Heavenly Kingdom.

> **"[9]Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, [10]Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God"** (1Co.6:9,10)!

This litany of explicit sins listed by the Apostle Paul is certainly comprehensive if not exhaustive; it is in fact but a representation of every sin that a man or woman could possibly commit – and there are many. Moreover, sin is very pervasive to the extent that it is impossible for men and women to overcome their corrupt sin-nature through human effort; only the blood of Christ can wash it away (cf. 1Co.6:11). We have read in the Revelation that:

> **"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son"** (Re.21:7)**.**

Those who overcome their sin-nature can do so only by exercising faith and trust in Christ, which they have received as a gift of the Holy Spirit, through whom they will inherit all things as sons of God. The unrepentant reprobate, who remain in their sinful state, cannot possibly appreciate or inherit anything within God's Kingdom:

> **"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"** (Re. 21:8).

Leading this list of those who are destined for the lake of fire are "the fearful." Although the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom,[689] that fear does not insure that a sinner will submit himself to God's will.

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[689]cf. Ps. 111:10; Pr. 9:10.

Quite the contrary, the reprobate not only fear God but will come to hate and defy Him, as they seek to confirm and elevate their place among fellow unbelieving miscreants. Through attempting to hide themselves from God, whose judgment they fear, they become detestable murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars – lying even to themselves. Suffice it to say, their actions portend a very frightening expectation concerning their eternal habitation.

God's Wrath to Remain on those in Hell

Because fallen men vehemently reject and even fiercely hate God, they may actually believe they would enjoy residing in a place where God would no longer be present to accuse and trouble them. However, Hell is actually a place where only God's saving grace and mercy is taken away, never again to be experienced; God's love that the reprobate have spurned will have been replaced by his essential wrath, which is manifested as an all-consuming fire specifically reserved for the ungodly. The reprobate must suffer the torment due them in a living Hell without end. Indeed, that is what all sinners deserve from God's bar of justice, and it must be the ultimate destiny of all men and women who have stubbornly rejected the penal substitutionary atonement so freely offered in the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Degrees of Punishment in Hell

Upon the resurrection of the lost,[690] all of those whose names were not found in the book of life[691] must receive the universal punishment for their unreconciled sin-nature by being permanently incarcerated in Hell. Beyond that, the type and intensity of punishment received will be determined by individual sins that each have committed on earth, both as to their depravity and their frequency, which were recorded in the books of their works.[692]

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[690] cf. The Resurrection of the Eternally Lost, page 612.

[691] cf. The Lamb's Book of Life is Searched, Commentary page 393.

The forms of punishment to be meted out can be separated into two general categories: a physical torment experienced by the body, and an extreme mental anguish experienced by the mind and soul. Some will experience both one or the other to a greater or lesser degree, corresponding to the iniquitous deeds they have committed during their earthly lives.

Physical Torment

All pain is a consequence of the inherited sin-nature of man that is being condemned in our flesh. Thus, in our mortal lifetimes, all men and women experience periods of extreme physical pain; some that runs its course and ends in healing, and still other pain that ultimately ends with the death of the physical body. The resurrected bodies of the damned will not possess the immortal bodies given the redeemed within the first resurrection; rather, the bodies of the reprobate will be but reconstituted mortal bodies that will still be able to suffer physical pain. Even as the "worm" of their deeply embedded sin continues to painfully gnaw at their continuously decaying bodies, God's angry wrath will envelop their bodies like flames of burning fire to consume their corruption.

The physical torment experienced in Hell will be astounding inasmuch as God is an all consuming fire that is fully evidenced in his all-consuming wrath that has no end. As we have said, fire is likely a metaphor, such that what it represents could be far worse than the blistering flames of fire. Even so, we cannot totally discount the possibility that it is actually a literal fire that continually devours the flesh of the physical bodies of the lost, which in their final eternal state can never be fully consumed. In that sense, Hell may very well be permeated with the combined stench of burning sulfur and burning human flesh.

Mental Anguish

Although physical pain originates in the body, it is actually perceived in the mind. In that sense all pain is essentially mental anguish. In addition to intense physical torment, Hell's occupants must endure along

[692]cf. The Books are Opened, Commentary page 392.

with it a mental anguish that will be the most terrible torment of all – far exceeding the terror of the most horrible nightmare humanly imaginable. The condemned can, of course, expect much of this mental torture to be heaped upon them by Satan and his demons who will share this terrible place with them. However, many other condemned humans will also pile their vile accusations and cursing upon fellow inhabitants of Hell, as they blame each other for their sufferings in this terrible place.

Thus, those who have falsely assumed that they would encounter companionable company in Hell will soon discover that in this place everyone only cares about themselves and their own intense sufferings. In fact, in their self-centered state, the residents of Hell will passionately hate each other. So much so, that those in Hell will make every effort to separate themselves from its other occupants, further increasing the desolation and forlorn loneliness of that terrible place.

The worse torment of all will be the self-condemnation that the reprobate will heap upon themselves. This self-inflicted torment will be derived from the haunting memory of the terrible sins that they had committed on earth, for which they must now pay reparation. They will also suffer from the intense unsatisfied sinful lusts still burning within their corrupt bodies, and the simultaneous condemnation of those lusts by their greatly enhanced consciences. They will bemoan how sinful diversionary pleasures that they had passionately sought out on earth caused them to ignore the persistent warning of their conscience regarding their ultimate destiny in Hell – until it was too late.

In a sense, everyone in Hell will have chosen to go to this terrible place. Finding themselves suffering in this place of their choosing, many may immediately cry out for God's mercy. However, there can be no genuine repentance possible; it is far too late once they have entered into this eternal place of the damned for them to receive God's forgiveness. Moreover, the God of mercy cannot be expected to visit this dark remote place in which He has forever banished them and their embedded iniquity out of his sight to be remembered no more.

Torment of the Knowledge of Heaven's Existence

Those suffering in Hell will be envious of those in Heaven who do not suffer as do they. Yet, they will have no desire to actually enter Heaven, for they are physically and mentally unable to appropriate or appreciate it. They are indeed angry about just men made perfect in Christ who can do so. Men will not change their disposition toward God in the afterlife.

> **"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"** (Re. 22:11).

The unclean state of the reprobate is permanent as is the holy and righteous state of the Just. Thus, the very thought of the existence of Heaven will constitute additional mental anguish for the reprobate; Heaven would actually be viewed as a repugnant place for them to reside, because it would then be mandatory for them to worship God and his Son and to associate with redeemed saints – all of whom they have before and still greatly despise.

The British lay theologian and Christian apologist C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) devised an allegorical parody that illustrates this wide separation between the just and the unjust as an angry irreconcilable divorce between God and the reprobate sinner, who had committed spiritual adultery with God's arch enemy, Satan.[693]

This "great divorce" separates the godly from the ungodly, even as siblings are often separated from each other following their parents' divorce. Some siblings are designated to permanently live with one parent and some to live with the other on a permanent basis depending upon the sibling's preference or disposition. In Lewis' allegorical "divorce," some have gone to live with God in Heaven, while others have been sent to live with Satan in Hell.

In the case of a more affable divorce, visitation rights can sometimes be established. Regarding this prospect, Lewis wrote in his allegory

[693] cf. *The Great Divorce: The Nature of Heaven and Hell*, C. S. Lewis, ca. 1945.

about an imaginary bus ride wherein some in Hell were transported to Heaven for a brief visit. However, when they arrived, there they found that they were but as ghost-like creatures; for, they had suffered the second death. They could not actually walk upon Heaven's streets; nor could they converse with its inhabitants, who in their glorified bodies were radically different from themselves. Unlike them, the residents had been translated into eternal creatures made suitable to occupy and enjoy Heaven. Therefore, there was absolutely no place to be found for the likes of these alien visitors within their corrupt bodies in Heaven; the only place suitable for them was their abode in the depths of Hell from which they had come. Thus, when the imaginary bus returned for them, no passengers were late or missing for the return trip.

Of course, this is but a mere illustrative allegory, for such "visitation rights" to enter Heaven could not possibly be arranged. No one in Heaven will ever be sent into Hell to visit its residents, inasmuch as they all have been eternally transformed and are identified as beloved children of God. Likewise those in Hell cannot be reformed in such a way that they can be made fit to visit Heaven even for a moment (cf. Lu.16:26). Since they have become eternally identified as the children of Satan through the second death, they would be immediately consumed by God's glory should they somehow manage to enter Heaven.

Hence, this "great divorce" between the redeemed of God and the reprobate is absolute. The eternal home of the damned in Hell with Satan is permanent, even as the home of the redeemed in Heaven with God and his Christ is permanent. There will be no escape from Hell possible; for even if that could somehow be arranged, there would be no other place suitable for the condemned to go or to reside.

Conclusion

As we conclude this very distressing discussion on Hell, it must again be stated that although it has been based upon Scripture through an application of those texts, it is at best but a vague representation of Hell's true reality. It is quite possible that we have erred in some of our assertions through exaggeration; but having said that, there is a far

greater likelihood that we have erred in a way that understates the true horrors of Hell and the actual suffering of its occupants. Hell will truly be reprobate mankind's worse nightmare from which they can never ever awaken. ■

Heaven

Holy Scripture has much more to say about the harsh realities of Hell and the terrifying things that await the reprobate there, than it does about the realities and great joys that await the redeemed in Heaven. The first is essential knowledge, because the vast majority of mankind is currently on the broad way to Hell. Men desperately need to turn from their wickedness before it is too late, and the knowledge of what awaits them in Hell places a great emphasis upon their urgent need to turn to God and his Christ and repent of their iniquity.

Even so, men are unable to do so because of their inbred sin nature that was inherited at birth from Adam. Only divine intervention can save fallen men from themselves. That intervention occurs when, through an act of unmerited grace, the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son to indwell chosen men and women, thus enabling them to see their desperate need for the eternal redemption so freely offered to them through Jesus Christ. Immediately their eternal destination will change; their thoughts shift away from any contemplation of the terrors of Hell, which all men deserve, inclining them instead to contemplate the wonders now awaiting them in Heaven.

Preliminary Summary

While the Elect greatly desire to discover as much as they possibly can about this marvelous place in which they shall spend eternity, much remains hidden to us in this mortal life such that we must place our assurance firmly upon faith in the goodness of God to deliver on all his promises at the time He has appointed. Since those eternal promises can not yet be realized, we must patiently await a future life in a future world for their fulfillment. Therefore, in this world, we must carefully walk by faith and not by natural sight (cf. 2Co.5:7).

Although beyond our present understanding, we perceive that, as the beloved in Christ, we shall one day experience many joyful wonders in Heaven within new immortal bodies, as we drink of the water of eternal

life and eat of the fruit from the tree of life that extends outward to us from God's throne.

What it will actually be like for us to abide in the very presence of God and his Christ, as well as any details concerning our eternal kinship with all the others of Adam's redeemed race, and our broader relationship with the vast myriads of angels and other Heavenly creatures, remains largely unknown. For,

> **"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.** (1Co. 2:9; cf. Is.64:4).

No mortal eye has ever seen the wonders of Heaven, nor has its glories ever been spoken into the mortal ear. Moreover, the human heart has not yet received those things, for mortal man is incapable of comprehending them. In that sense, it would seem wise to merely halt our dialogue here, and leave unrecorded any discussion of the wondrous glories of Heaven that God has prepared for those who love Him – lest we presume to know that which is humanly unknowable.

> **"But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God"** (1Co.2:10).

Therefore, the Holy Spirit living within the redeemed imparts spiritual knowledge to them concerning all of those things that God has prepared for us directly to our minds – apart from the ability of the human eye to see or of the human ear to hear of it.

> [12]**"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.** [13]**Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual"** (1Co. 2:12,13).

Hence, a search for "the deep things of God," requires a great amount of very cautious speculation by us mortals, for we are totally dependent upon the leading of the Holy Spirit to fill in many of the gray areas concerning Heaven that have not been specifically recorded within Holy Scripture. The Holy Spirit searches out all the deep things of God in order to reveal them to the redeemed, such that we may be encouraged and not fall into despair, as we experience many severe trials and tribulations within our earthly lives here upon this earth.

In this article, we shall attempt to provide a reasonable interpretation of all of "the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" within Heaven, as the Holy Spirit brings it to mind. Even so, what follows is not intended to be a dogmatic or comprehensive account of how things necessarily will be, because the human mind so often intervenes to invent things that are not truly imparted to us by the Spirit. At best, then, the text that follows can only be considered to be a subjective record of how those things will most probably be as they have been perceived through a spiritual perspective that has been filtered through a mortal mind by the agency of faith. Faith is the only reliable evidence we have of those things that we have not seen nor heard through our natural senses (cf. He.11:1). With that essential caveat in mind, we shall now begin this treatise on Heaven as we pray that the Holy Spirit will override our human feebleness of mind.

We shall first begin with a definition of the word, "heaven," followed by a conceptual account of the configuration of the New heavens and New earth, within the vast continuum of eternity in which Heaven subsists. Then, we shall allow ourselves to carefully speculate concerning the glorified nature of redeemed man including the possible properties of his new glorified spiritual body.

We shall also provide a subjective analysis of redeemed man's existence in Heaven including his many interpersonal relationships – beginning with his close personal relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ, then with other redeemed men, and with the angels and still other divine beings.

We shall then close this Article with a contemplation of redeemed man's preordained activities in Heaven, in accordance with the ultimate purpose and high position for which he was created and called by God to fulfill within eternity.

Heaven Defined

"Heaven" is a word that can be defined in three different ways. First, the word "heaven," or "heavens," as found in the Old Testament, is derived from two Hebrew words *shaw-mah'-yim,* and *shaw-meh'* meaning *lofty* – or the vast arch above the earth in which the clouds and luminaries move about. Therefore, without capitalization, heaven is often used to designate the visible sky above the earth, commonly referred to as the first heaven.

Beyond that first heaven is the cosmos, a vast physical universe consisting of great regions of empty space, which is nevertheless heavily populated with innumerable galaxies consisting of numerous stars and planets, commonly referred to as the second heaven. While this great physical cosmos is a creation of God, which declares his glory and the firmament above the earth displays his creative works (cf. Ps. 19;1), it is not God's abode, nor does it contain Him (cf. 2Chr. 2:6). Even if we could explore every corner of this vast physical universe, we would never directly encounter God.

The third definition of Heaven (Greek, *oo-ran-os'*) is the all-important one, for it is directly applicable to the subject of this article, in which the capitalized word "Heaven" defines a third heaven,[694] which is the abode and vast domain of God that exists beyond all known time and space. Unlike the visible heavens, this Heaven is a far greater region, which mortal man cannot explore nor can he see it from earth – except through his "mind's eye" as the Holy Spirit opens his mind to discern it.

Lastly, "Heaven" is often used to designate the vast host of God's intelligent creatures, which are contained within the third Heaven as a

[694]cf. 2Co. 12:2,3.

unique entity, as well as those men who through divine redemption have inherited a place in Heaven.

The Apostle Paul stated in his letter to the Philippians, that there is a sense in which the redeemed are already living within that vast domain along with the great hosts of Heaven – even as they yet remain in mortal flesh down here upon this earth:

> **"[20]For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: [21]Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself"** (Ph. 3:20,21)**.**

As many as are in Christ Jesus are even now citizens of Heaven, vivaciously living there through the indwelling Holy Spirit with Him in Heaven. Our present communion with the great hosts of Heaven is also being vicariously realized through a changed way of life like unto theirs, as we are being sanctified through the workings of the Holy Spirit to conform us to Christ over our mortal life-times. Nevertheless, we find that in this life we always fall short of sanctified perfection while still in our mortal state. So much so, that we yearn for the future return of Christ, at which time He will fully sanctify and transliterate us from the mortal into the immortal state in new glorified bodies like unto his glorious body; thus, rendering us fully suitable to join the great immortal hosts currently residing within Heaven.[695]

A Speculative Configuration of Heaven

We have considerable information concerning the spiritual properties of Heaven that have been revealed to us in the inspired texts of Revelation Chapters 21 and 22.[696] In the opening text of Chapter 21 we read,

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[695]cf. The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church, page 492.

[696]We have discussed those texts at some length in our Commentary section beginning on page 397.

> **"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"** (Re.21:1).

This inspired text, recorded by the Apostle John, speaks of a future passing away of the present-day creation, followed by the genesis of an entirely New Creation consisting of a New heaven and a New earth. This transition had been earlier revealed in more dramatic detail by the Apostle Peter in his third epistle:

> **"[10]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. [11]***Seeing* **then** *that* **all these things shall be dissolved, what manner** *of persons* **ought ye to be in** *all* **holy conversation and godliness, [12]Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat** (2Pe. 3:10-12)?"

The day of this transition will come forth without any prior warning as a sudden massive implosion of our presently perceived universe takes place and all of the elements within it melt and dissolve away with extreme heat. All of the works of man on earth will be burned up just as if it never was. This implosion of the present universe is necessary to make way for the New heavens and the New earth to come forth in its place.

Coming forth as it does from the mind of God, the configuration of the New heavens and New earth is unlimited in scope and is thus largely incomprehensible to the mind of mortal man. While, much of what follows in the text below regarding the configuration of the coming New heavens and New earth is believed to be conceptually correct, any details presented are largely influenced by cautious human speculation.

Nevertheless, from the description of the New heavens and the New earth, which is recorded in Holy Scripture, and has been exposited with-

in our commentary, we clearly comprehend that the New heavens will consist of one massive sphere of God's glory, power, and influence (cf. Illustration 13 below on page 664), which subsists as an extension of His own eternal Being. We can reasonably assume that this great sphere has been expanding within an infinite continuum[697] for immeasurable eons. In like manner, we also theorize that this sphere will continue expanding throughout all eternity.[698]

The New Jerusalem

Located at the very center of this massive sphere of God's glory, power, and influence is a magnificent City, a New Jerusalem, after which the old Jerusalem on earth had been named and patterned as a "type." The central feature of the old Jerusalem was a magnificent Temple, central within which was the Holy of Holies containing the "projected" presence of God the Father; whereas, the New Jerusalem is built around the true unmovable throne of God the Father, which is firmly anchored within Heaven itself. The Holy City will exhibit the cubicle shape of the Holy of Holies, with the dimension of each of its six sides measuring approximately one mile.[699]

Sitting alongside the Father of all creation upon his magnificent throne is Jesus Christ, whom the Father had begotten from the dead of Adam's fallen race as his eternal Son: who is by nature and inheritance fully God from all eternity, while yet remaining fully man who was redeemed by the Father out of earth-time.[700] The great glory of the Father and the Son radiating outward from the throne manifests itself in a blinding light.

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[697]cf. The Great Celestial Continuum, page 670.

[698]cf. The Mystery Surrounding Time and Eternity, page 668.

[699](cf. Overall Dimensions and Configuration of the Celestial City, Commentary page 407.

[700]cf. Earth-Time page 669.

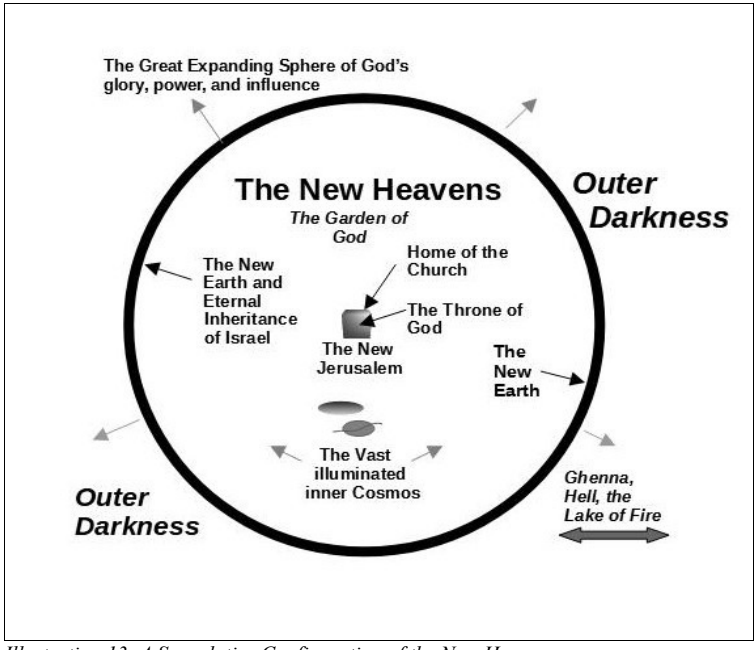

Illustration 13: A Speculative Configuration of the New Heavens

The Great Eternal Light

The great light of God's glory is perpetually radiating outward from the throne room of God and of the Son; such that there can be no darkness or shadow anywhere within the great expanding sphere of God's glory – not only within the Holy City itself, but anywhere upon the New earth as well. Hence, there will be no night there (cf. Re 22:5), but rather one never-ending day throughout the vast expanse of the great sphere of God's great glory, power, and influence.

This New Jerusalem is the eternal abode of the Church, which Christ has prepared for his own (cf. Jn. 14:2,3). It is made up of those of Adam's race who have been apprehended and redeemed by God the Father through the giving of the Holy Spirit, and who have been fully justified and united as one with Christ in his atoning death and resurrection. The redeemed shall live forever with Him within the New

Jerusalem as his most-valued personal possession; even as a Pearl of great price,[701] which was wrought forth by Christ Himself through much suffering in his sacrificial death on their behalf.

The New Earth

Whereas the old earth was a finite sphere upon which man had occupied the outer surface, and which had been illuminated by the light of the sun from without, we speculate that the New earth will be located upon the interior surface of the great expanding sphere of God's glory, power, and influence, which is everywhere illuminated with God's great eternal light radiating outward from the New Jerusalem.[702]

We further theorize that the New earth will be made up of a supernatural substance that will be far different from that of the old earth, which was made up of rock and soil – yet somewhat analogous to it such that vegetation can readily flourish upon it. The New earth's crust and foundation could approach a near infinite thickness, thus creating an impenetrable barrier to the outer darkness that lies beyond it.[703] Unlike the old earth we are told that the New earth will consist of one contiguous "land mass," such that there will be no great body of water such as an ocean or sea upon it (cf. Re.21:1).[704]

The New earth will be the eternal abode and inheritance of the chosen of Israel's race who had been sealed by God the Father, and of all

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[701]cf. Mt. 13:45,46.

[702] This hypothesis of a New earth that is populated on the inner surface of a great sphere is suggested by the fact that there can be no night or darkness at any point upon the New earth. As God's great light is radiating out from the New Jerusalem, it cannot be anywhere shadowed by the Earth's own mass, as is half of the area of our present global earth from the light of the sun (cf. Re.2:5; Commentary page 417).

[703]cf. The Outer Darkness, page 667.

[704]Sea, *thalassa,* in this verse is derived from *hals* implying that all seas must contain salt. This leaves open to interpretation whether or not the New earth could contain smaller fresh-water lakes containing *hudōr* the water of life (cf. Re. 22:1).

those Jews who had been ransomed from the fall by Jesus Christ as the Millennial Age on earth had begun. They and their descendants were declared to be righteous as they had populated the Millennial Kingdom upon the old earth. They had been miraculously transported to populate this magnificent New earth as the Millennial Age had come to an end, and the eternal Ages had begun.

The Vast Inner Cosmos

Within the vast "inner space" or cosmos existing between the New earth and the New Jerusalem is the true Eden, the great garden of God. This garden will contain many colorful and precious "gems and stones" of great fiery beauty. It was said that the archangel Lucifer had been in charge of this Edenic garden of God before his tragic fall into iniquity. Within the garden were the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: had existed in great abundance (cf. Ez. 28:13). Most likely those fiery stones are not the small gems as we know them here upon this old earth, but are instead many beautifully created worlds consisting of vast "galaxies", "suns" and "planets," which are heavily populated by myriads of angels, cherubim, and perhaps still other intelligent creatures about which we mortals have no current knowledge at all.[705]

God's laws governing this New Cosmos will most likely be different than those "natural laws" that had governed the old cosmos. Gravitational attraction would most likely need to be one of them. While our current cosmos appears to be peaceful as viewed from the earth, great telescopes reveal that there are many collisions of stars, planets and great galaxies taking place, as well as huge "black holes" that swallow up entire galaxies.[706] In complete contrast, this New inner cosmos making up

[705]Seraphim appear to be unique creatures, which are but four in number that permanently attend God at his throne (cf. Is. 6:1-3; Re. 4:6).

[706]Those calamitous events are most likely the result of Satan's iniquity that has not only infected mankind, but had adversely affected all of God's insentient creation as well.

the beautiful Edenic Garden of God will be very peaceful and orderly – lacking all of those current calamitous events.

This leads us to presume that this vast inner space will be populated with myriads of angelic beings each going about their assigned tasks maintaining order within the Heavenly Garden, even as they journey back and forth between the Holy city and the New earth. In like manner, we speculate that redeemed men in their new immortal bodies[707] will make use of this vast region as a great "highway" to travel back and forth between the New Jerusalem and the New earth in order to fulfill their assigned missions. The distances spanned by this route are enormous; but redeemed men in their immortal spiritual bodies, which have been fully liberated from the restrictions of time, will be capable of traveling those vast distances nearly instantaneously – even as do the angels.

The Outer Darkness

Beyond the New earth, bordering the great sphere of God's power, glory, and influence, remains a vast empty region, which is defined in Scripture as an "outer darkness." This is an infinite area into which God's light does not yet penetrate (cf. Mt. 8:12,13,30). Deep within that outer-darkness is a great inferno of untamed disorder, described in Scripture as a vast "lake of fire,"[708] which continually consumes everything contained within this vast external region – even as the sphere of God's power and influence continually expands to claim, subdue, and enlighten it with his glory.

Ghenna /Hell

Within the depths of this lake of fire is a terrifying region of fire and brimstone referred to in Holy Scripture as *Ghenna* or Hell.[709] It is essentially a vast fiery waste-dump of faulty discarded creatures whose lives had not fulfilled God's purpose for them and have thus been cast out as

[707]cf. The New Immortal Spiritual Body, page 673.

[708]cf. Re. 19:20; 20:10,14,15; 21:8.

[709]cf. Article on Hell on page 646.

worthless. Hell is the final destination of Satan and of all his demons who had rebelled against God, as well as all of those members of Adam's race who have embraced the iniquitous doctrines of Satan and have likewise opposed the will of God the Father and his Christ. All of those men and women will have been judged by God as reprobate – worthless for God's eternal purposes, as they had stood before the Great White Throne.[710]

The reprobate will thus find themselves forever bound up within this great lake of fire, the burning trash-heap of *Ghenna* – the punishment within which they had earned for themselves through many iniquitous deeds that they had committed throughout their mortal lifetimes upon the old earth. Although in our illustration shown above on page 664, the lake of fire appears to be just outside the great Heavenly sphere, in reality *Ghenna* will be flung so far away into the depths of outer darkness, that it and its occupants will never be seen nor heard of again.

The Mystery Surrounding Time and Eternity

Heaven is a world that is without beginning or end – forever existent throughout eternity. Thus, a great enigma surrounds time and eternity; for when we speak of eternity, we commonly envision a world in which time does not exist; or conversely, a world in which time never ends.

In a much earlier work,[711] we defined time as a creation of God that was specifically designed for mankind's use on earth in a mortal sphere of existence.[712] Thus, when Adam sinned, Adam died in an eternal sense – yet he continued to live upon the earth within his mortal flesh for a span of "time" (i.e. 930 years; cf. Ge. 5:5) – until his body finally returned to the dust from which it had come (cf. Ge.3:19). In the many generations since Adam, each man has had his

[710]cf. The Great White Throne Judgment, Commentary page 390.

[711]cf. Newsletter Article February 2012.

[712] cf. *CRC.* Book I, Chapter 3:1, page 142.

or her own day on earth under the sun before, through the passage of "time," his or her body also returned to the basic elements of the earth from which it was made.

Thus, mortal mans' brief sojourn on earth is surrounded in a mystery; for "time" cannot be seen, heard, or touched, as being in any way a tangible substance, nor can it be properly understood as energy. Therefore, time is best defined as a subjective observation by man in which a continuous unstoppable and irreversible sequence of thoughts and events passes from an indistinctly remembered past through the present and into a dimly perceived future. In that sense, time exists only within man's minds – yet, we are very consciously preoccupied with it, for it steadfastly regulates all that we are and do in this life on earth.

Earth-Time

This steadfast perception of time is what we may properly refer to as earth-time; which God had created to be perceived by man through the regular repetitive movements of the earth, its moon, and its sun within his physical heaven that is also filled with many visible stars that mark even longer periods. Thus, we find that there is a time created for everything than man proposes to do upon earth from his birth to his physical death. For, as Solomon opined,

> **"[1]To every** *thing there is* **a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: [2]A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up** *that which is* **planted; [3]A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; [4]A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; [5]A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; [6]A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; [7]A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; [8]A time to love, and a time to**

hate; a time of war, and a time of peace" (Ec.3:1-8).

We commonly use clocks and calendars to keep track of time in an orderly temporal fashion, yet its actual passage seems to be a variable: When we are young, time appears to pass very slowly; however, as we age it appears to increasingly pass by more quickly until as we near the end of our lives, time appears to rush by in a blur of days, months, and years. All of this preoccupation with time would have little meaning, except that each man and woman knows that this progression of time ultimately leads to an abrupt end of his or her present physical existence through the death of the human body. Hence, we find that time is inexorably linked with mans' mortality on earth, and without that connection, the passage of time would have no significant meaning at all.

The Great Celestial Continuum

In our future existence, following the resurrection of the body, all of mankind will live in an immortal state of being as they move out of the present finite sphere of earth-time and space into the limitless expanses of eternity and infinity. It is significant for us to realize, however, that should "time" marking a sequence of thoughts and events come to an end, everything would freeze in place and come to a full stop. Without the passage of "time," there could be no understanding of a past or a future, only a never-ending present in which no thoughts, activities or change of any sort could take place.

Therefore, it becomes necessary to believe that as God wills a sequence of thoughts and events will continue on in Heaven, such that various activities are possible and various ordained alterations will continue to take place within that never-ending era, which we refer to as Eternity. Hence, we perceive that a "celestial-continuum" threads throughout eternity without end; which cannot be measured by clocks or calendars, since that which is infinite cannot be subdivided. Unlike earth-time, there can be no concept of decay or of aging in that celestial-continuum, for within it nothing can deteriorate or cease to exist;

all changes will be positive as God ordains it into being to continually refresh and perfect his vast celestial Domain.

Therefore, earth-time is but an infinitesimal interval within the vastness of the celestial continuum. Yet, it is a very significant interval in which God has performed amazing works in his endeavor to eliminate all iniquity from his Heavenly Kingdom, by redeeming many sons of Adam in the likeness and righteousness of Christ to forever share in his glory throughout the infinite ages to come.

The Curse of Physical Death is Limited to Earth-Time

The curse of physical death has been closely associated with the earth on which sin had prevailed after Adam's fall. Just prior to the old heavens' fiery end, Satan will have been cast into Hell having been preceded a thousand years earlier by his Antichrist and the False Prophet. Thereafter the reprobate lost will also have been judged before the Great White Throne and cast into the fires of Hell.[713] All judgment of the old earth will have been fully executed, and all opposition to God and his Christ will have been completely overthrown. All sin and iniquity will have been decimated, such that the purpose for death will have been accomplished and is no more.

When death is no more, the purpose for earth-time will have been completely fulfilled, such that it too must necessarily come to an end. The curse of death, which was imposed by God as the consequence of Adam's sin, will have been permanently done away with. Death would no longer serve any purpose in the Eternal Ages wherein righteousness will fully prevail supreme and unchallenged.

Thus in Revelation 20:14, we read that "death and the grave" will one day be cast into the lake of fire. Death, the dreaded enemy of mankind, will be cast into the lake of fire within the outer darkness along with the grave (i.e. *Hades*) to be annihilated and to be remembered no more (cf. Re. 20:14).

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[713]cf. The Great White Throne Judgment, Commentary page 390.

The New Nature of Redeemed Man

The genesis of a new physical creation consisting of a New heaven and a New earth will likewise bring forth a new generation of mankind within New immortal bodies in which those men and women, who have been justified and conformed to the image of Christ, will be likewise glorified and made perfect to take their preordained place within the New Creation (cf. Ro. 8:29,30). This new immortal body will be vastly different and will constitute a great improvement over the old mortal body that we had previously occupied upon the old earth.

The Old Mortal Body

As a consequence of Adam's fall into sin, man's physical body ceased to have any permanence within itself; inasmuch as without the protective luminescence of the Holy Spirit, it became so easily subjected to disease, decay, and physical impact of every kind. Sixty-five percent of the human body is composed of water; furthermore, the life-blood that maintains human life is ninety percent water. Our skeletal frame is made up of brittle bones, which are a composite of proteins such as collagen and various minerals such as calcium. The outer surface of our frame is covered over with soft perishable flesh. Without nourishment and regular periods of rest, the body cannot long survive.

Our human senses are very limited; there are many colors that our eyes cannot see, and there are many sounds that our ears cannot hear. The human brain cannot process anything of which it is not aware, and those things of which we are aware are often distorted by our own flesh to the extent that we readily accept a false worldview as fact. The spiritual aspect of the world about us remains hidden beneath the secular. Only when God sends the Holy Spirit to indwell us through a spiritual rebirth are spiritual things perceived, and even then they are sensed as being dimly viewed through a very clouded lens.

The human brain is underutilized to the extent that about ninety percent of its capacity remains unused. Moreover, it must also undergo frequent periods of rest during which we have no conscious awareness of

anything about us. Those periods of sleep typically occupy somewhere near one-third of our total lifetime. During those periods in which we have no awareness, we are highly vulnerable to external forces of nature and violent acts of fallen mankind. Nevertheless, in this life, we must sleep in order to renew our strength for another day.

We have considerable physical limitations as well. We accomplish so few things in this life because our bodies are simply not capable of doing more. As we grow older, we more rapidly become tired, even as various illnesses and pain severely limit our capacity to think and to work. The natural body continues to deteriorate over time, such that death inevitably awaits it.

The New Immortal Spiritual Body

While in death we are sown as a decaying mortal body, we shall be resurrected in Christ within an immortal spiritual body (cf. 1Co. 15:44). While the natural body through the corruption of man's spirit had yielded to mortal flesh and was thus destined to receive death, the new body, having the living spirit of Christ within it is thereby fully enabled to appropriate eternal life. Our spiritual body of the resurrection will have been specifically designed for the permanence of Heaven; it shall have none of the earlier limitations of our earthly mortal bodies. Whereas mortal eyes and ears were limited to function within physical surroundings, the redeemed with new immortal eyes and ears will likewise be able to see and hear spiritual things and beings that were invisible and inaudible to men's mortal senses. In Heaven, the mind of immortal man will be fully utilized and enabled to comprehend and to know all things that were of necessity denied to the mortal mind because of our fallen nature and our earlier propensity to desire evil over good.

Composition of the New Spiritual Body

We are told very little in Scripture about the material composition of our new spiritual bodies, but we do know that in them we shall be like Christ in his glorified physical form, "...for we shall see Him as

He is" (1Jn.3:2). In Heaven, all of the redeemed will subsist in the likeness of Christ within our bodily substance of glorified flesh. Replacing the natural water that had made up so much of our old mortal bodies, will be the living water of eternal life that will be continuously replenished by God, the giver of life, as it abundantly flows out from his throne within the New Jerusalem (cf. Re.22:1).

We do not know whether or not there will be any kind of "atmosphere" for man to breathe in Heaven. The eternal anatomy of the New Body may very well be such that man will not need to breathe in oxygen or other gasses to live and to function. Moreover, various other "natural laws" that had inhibited man's physical function on the old earth will most likely be altered or replaced in Heaven with new laws that will aid and increase man's utility within his new immortal body.

In the Millennium, we saw that man had once again become a vegetarian, as was Adam and Eve in the first Eden. The ingenuity of man was turned away from creating instruments of war into producing the machinery of agriculture in order to feed the rapidly growing masses of humanity (cf. Is.2:4; Mi.4:3).[714] However, in the Eden of Heaven, fruit will grow with such abundance that there will be no need to cultivate it through agriculture. Redeemed man will freely drink of the ever-flowing water of life and will eat of the fruit from the tree of life, which grows with great abundance and variety, to continually maintain eternal life within themselves.

Our immortal bodies will never grow old nor will they ever become tired. For that reason, we find that there will be no need of night in Heaven (cf. Re.22:5) in which man can sleep; for the rest provided by mortal sleep will no longer be needed. There will be no relentless process of time working on our new bodies to take its toll on our strength. In this life, we can but imagine living in a body that is always in peak condition and always ready to do our bidding without rest. However, within our future immortal body, all limitations of the old mortal body will have been removed.

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[714]cf. Population Explosion during the Millennium, page 629.

In those new glorified immortal bodies, all previous ethnicity, social status or gender,[715] will have been eliminated. As the Apostle Paul stated concerning the exalted position that we all enjoy together as one in Christ,

> **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"** (Ga.3:28).

Therefore, those living with Christ in Heaven, whether they had been earlier identified on earth as Jews or Gentiles, or whether they had been created as men or women, will in like manner become sons of God in Christ. Moreover, the previously immature and the previously old mortals, as they had been removed from the earth and taken into Heaven, will all alike inherit new fully mature spiritually-enhanced bodies in the likeness of Christ that are without definable age.[716]

Interpersonal Relationships in Heaven

While much is said regarding the New heavens and the New earth in the Revelation, very little is said about what it will be like for man to actually live there. That leaves us with many questions about the redeemed and their relationship with other beings in Heaven that we shall now attempt to answer in the following paragraphs.

We have chosen to present a subjective perspective of the blessed inhabitants of Heaven living within the Eternal Ages. This perspective is based upon a careful consideration of the information found within the Revelation as well as relevant teachings obtained from other Scriptural texts.

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[715]There will be no need of procreation in Heaven, for redeemed man of earth will subsist forever – filling Heaven with his presence in the many trillions of trillions.

[716]There will be no baby, adolescent, or old bodies present in Heaven; all will receive new spiritually-enhanced bodies of perfect mature form.

The Intimate Relationship of Man with God

Of course, the most wonderful thing of all about living in the New Creation will be the intimate familiar relationship redeemed man will enjoy with God the Creator, whom we shall actually see upon his throne in all his radiant majesty;[717] for, we shall be his sons and He shall be our Father. We shall directly confer with Jesus Christ face-to-face as He truly is, even as we shall share with Him as brothers in the inheritance of all his vast domain. There can be no more separation of man from his Creator possible in the Heavenly realm (cf. Ro. 8:38,39); God and man will finally subsist eternally in perfect harmony within Christ as we go about to joyfully obey and honor Him.[718]

The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit

When we are born anew in Christ, the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son to permanently abide within us. Although we cannot see Him, we know that He is there as He directs our thoughts and actions from within. In Heaven, through new immortal eyes, we shall actually see God the Father as well as Jesus Christ sitting upon the majestic throne in the New Jerusalem, but nowhere do we find any text stating that the Holy Spirit can be seen as a specific separate entity in Heaven. The Holy Spirit is a personal being that is so deeply integrated within the Godhead that when the Father speaks, whether directly or through his Son, the Holy Spirit, exercising the motive power of God, acts upon those words to make it so.[719]

Throughout Scripture, we find the Holy Spirit's role being asserted through various powerful acts. In Genesis, we discovered his presence

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[717]God is a pure spirit whom man cannot see with his mortal eyes. Only after we receive new spiritually-enhanced immortal bodies will we be able to see Him as He truly is.

[718]cf. The Exalted Position of Redeemed Man in Heaven below on page 684.

[719]Although it would seem that the Holy Spirit occupies a subordinate role to the Father and the Son in this respect, we must understand that He shares the same high eternal standing with them within the Godhead, such that his personal deity must not be disparaged or disregarded.

in the physical act of God's creation of the old heavens and earth, which He presently oversees in accordance with God's Word. The Holy Spirit protects the existence and oversees the movements of galaxies, stars and planets, keeping them all within their preordained paths.

The Holy Spirit is also involved with the protection of the earth and its environment. He regulates the atmospheric temperature on earth, through the internal workings of the sun, as well as overseeing every other aspect of the earth's climate. Through the moon, He directs the ocean's tides; and He periodically sends forth great storms, and directs volcanic eruptions, and massive earthquakes that shake the earth. All of his activities serves to remind us of our frailty with respect to God's mighty power over his creation, of which we are but a fragile component.

When God resolved to destroy the irredeemably corrupt mankind on earth in Noah's day, it was the Holy Spirit who directed the natural forces that brought about the great deluge, sparing only Noah and his immediate family within the ark of God's protection. The Holy Spirit will most certainly be involved in the future dissolution of the old heavens and old earth, as well as the creation of the New heavens and the New earth that will replace it.

Beside all that activity, the Holy Spirit presently fills the role of an ambassador of Heaven on earth, having been sent forth by the Father and the Son to secure the Elect of earth-bound mankind. It is by God the Father acting through the agency of the Holy Spirit that men are convicted of sin and are led to Christ through a spiritual rebirth. In doing so, the Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself, that He should receive glory, but glorifies the person of Christ as the only way, the very Word of Truth, and the sole means to attain immortal life eternal. Afterward, the Holy Spirit remains within the redeemed to instruct, to guide, to comfort, and to protect them.

The Holy Spirit's divine presence within us will become all the more evident when we arrive in Heaven, for there we shall encounter a way of life that is radically different from that which we had previously experienced upon the earth. There we will experience the Holy Spirit's contin-

uing presence through his many unending activities to aid and to guide us that we may not fail in the great purpose that God has intended for us.

The Relationship between Man and the Angels

Heaven is currently filled with innumerable angelic beings swiftly going about their assigned tasks through which they faithfully serve God, and behind the scenes they often see to the needs of redeemed mankind on earth and execute judgment on the reprobate. As we have noted elsewhere, angels are not physical beings; their "bodies" are apparently composed of pure energy, which can on occasion be made to appear as a material substance to the eyes of mortals.[720] On our current earth, we often find evidence of their many activities, yet they commonly remain invisible to us; only on very special occasions have angels appeared to mortal men. In Heaven, however, angels will always be visible to the eyes of redeemed men made perfect in Christ.

Even as Christ has defeated and has displaced the fallen archangel Lucifer, redeemed man who are subservient to Christ within the Heavenly realm will replace Lucifer's fallen angels (i.e. demons), which had not kept their first high position, but through engaging in Lucifer's iniquity had lost their habitation in Heaven. Thus, Christ has bound Lucifer's demons with eternal chains within outer darkness awaiting their final judgment and disposition within the lake of fire of Hell (cf. Jude v. 6).

The angels under the headship of the archangels Gabriel and Michael who have remained loyal to God will thus welcome redeemed mankind in Heaven as their fellow-servants (cf. Re. 19:10; 22:9), as under the headship of Jesus Christ redeemed man work and move about

[720]When angels appear to men on earth they appear as men, and are often mistaken for men (cf. Ac. 1:10). They are never described as women, since there is no distinction of male or female among the angels and who never marry (cf. Mt.22:30). As an aside, nowhere in Scripture is it said that angels have wings. This notion is probably derived from the description of the Seraphim, a unique creature having six wings, who guard God's throne in Heaven (cf. Commentary Page 182). Even more likely, this notion is derived from a description of the Cherubim, still another unique creature that would appear to have but two powerful and massive wings (cf. 1Ki.6:27; 2Chr. 3:11-13).

together with the loyal angels to serve the express will and purposes of God.[721]

Communication Among the Inhabitants of Heaven

Scripture is largely silent about how communication among the inhabitants of Heaven will take place, but it is necessary to believe that communication as some form of exchange of thought will be possible. Some have viewed this exchange as being telepathic communication of thought without underlying words. However, it is difficult to imagine the transmission of meaningful thought without words with which to express it.

While God has spoken to our minds and hearts concerning his presence and power through the glory of his physical creation without using actual words (cf. Ro. 1:20), He has nevertheless chosen to speak to us more directly through his divine Word to make clear his precepts and principles, which are recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

We note that Adam clearly heard and spoke with God in the earthly garden presumably using some form of language. Before the flood, all men on earth apparently spoke that same universal language, which God had necessarily confounded at Babel[722] to disperse them and to prevent them from uniting themselves in useless opposition to Him.

In Matthew 17:3 we observe that Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, which implies an exchange of thought through some form of audible language, perhaps Hebrew, perhaps a Heavenly language. The Apostle Paul obliquely spoke of the "tongues of angels" in First Corinthians 13:1, thus implying that there may be a language uniquely understood and spoken only among angels. Nevertheless, throughout the Revelation, angels spoke to John using words of a language that John clearly understood and had subsequently recorded in Greek.

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[721]cf. Man's Future Absolution and Great Reward, on page 588 of our Article entitled The Mystery of Iniquity.

[722]cf. The Partitioning of Languages, page 593.

Therefore, we conclude that there most likely will be a universal celestial language used in Heaven, by which we can directly communicate with other redeemed men, with the angels, with Christ – and even with God the Father. Whether this universal Heavenly language is audible or inaudible, it is reasonable to assume that it must be made up of words in order to communicate meaningful thought.

Singing in Heaven

On earth, we commonly praise God with our voices lifted up in song. Since we will praise God all the more within the Heavenly realm, it would seem strange that we could lose the ability to sing audibly in Heaven. However, to sing audibly requires an atmospheric medium to transfer the sound of our voice to a listening ear, and we cannot be sure of the existence of such a medium in Heaven. If human speech is transmittable, it could be assumed that the musical aspect of the human voice will be transferred along with it. Therefore, whether audible or inaudible, there will be a form of joyful "singing" in Heaven.

Some suppose that redeemed men will be able to sing along with the angels in Heaven, but no where in Scripture does it explicitly say that angels actually sing as do men. The closest we can come to assuming that they may do so is found in the poetic text of Job 38:7, wherein God stated that "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" at his creation of the foundations of the earth. However, this poetic verse is subject to considerable interpretation concerning the identification of angels as morning stars, or even as the "sons of God" – who had shouted for joy. Moreover, the word "sang" in this verse is derived from the Hebrew word *râ nan,* which merely means to make a "stridulous sound" or – to "shout out loud for joy."

In many other verses, such as Lu. 2:13,14 wherein the rejoicing of a great host of angels is found announcing Jesus birth, their utterance is characterized as common speech, not singing, by the Greek word *lego*, which was translated into English in verse 13 as "saying." However, if we consider singing as merely making musical sounds with the voice,

we cannot completely discount the common speech of angels as seeming melodic to the human ear.

Renewing Mortal Acquaintances in Heaven

Just as Jesus was recognizable by his Apostles in his physical body on earth after his resurrection, so shall we also be recognizable to each other in our immortal bodies. Even after our final glorification (cf. Ro.8:30), in which our resurrected bodies will have been greatly enhanced, our basic personalities will remain unchanged. We shall not become some strange being that is unrecognizable by our previous selves. Therefore, we will most assuredly recognize, greet, and be able to confer with prior earthly friends and relatives in Heaven.

In addition, we shall likely encounter, recognize, and communicate with many other saints whom we did not personally know upon earth, yet were made known to us through their many works that are recorded in Scripture. Many of those could be Old-Covenant saints such as the prophets and other men of old such as Abraham and Moses. Likewise, we may also meet and speak with many New-Covenant saints including Jesus' Apostles such as Peter, John, and Paul. Among this great number will also likely be more contemporary saints, such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Wesley, who through their many reformation writings have led us to a sound knowledge of Christ, as well as countless other even more contemporary believers who have confirmed us in the faith.

Although we shall greatly delight in those renewed relationships, they will not in any way diminish the overwhelming love we have for our Savior; indeed, the perfection of those relationships are only made perfect within the mutual love we all share for Christ as his beloved ones.

Spousal Relationships in Heaven

Marriage is a faithful institution established between one man and one woman for as long as both shall live upon the earth.[723] Hence, physical death of the body of either the husband or the wife, or of both, ends that physical relationship. Therefore, we must realize that in Heaven we shall experience a different form of relationship with our earthly spouses than that which we had earlier experienced here upon the earth. Just as we shall have been translated into a glorified new creation, so shall our redeemed spouses also have been changed.

There will be no purpose for continuing conjugal relationships in Heaven, because there will no longer be any need for the procreation of the glorified human race of mankind in eternity; it will have been completed while on earth, thus numbering fully redeemed man in the many trillions of trillions. The Lord Jesus said regarding this matter, that in Heaven man would be as the angels,[724] which are neither male nor female (cf. Mt.22:30), thus indicating that men and women will be physically identical in form within their new glorified bodies.

Nevertheless, the mutual love we as spouses once held for each other will remain, but it will be made perfect in the same manner that divine love is experienced within the Godhead. In our earthly marriages we often had but a foretaste of that love, but in Heaven it will be fully realized. Love will remain, but in a much purer form.

In Heaven, all of our personal relationships with each other will center around our mutual relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. Whether we were created male or female in our earlier mortal lives upon the earth, we shall all have received the same position as adopted sons of God. That is why Paul could say that there is no male or female in Christ; for regardless of prior ethnicity, social standing, or gender, we are all united as one in Him (cf. Ga.3:27,28).

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[723] cf. Newsletter Article February 2014

[724]Paul is not saying that we will be identical in substance with the angels, only that as the angels there will be no categories of male and female. While Man in Heaven will have received glorified physical bodies, angels were created as pure spirit-beings having no physical properties.

Reconciliation over Missing Loved Ones

When we arrive in Heaven we will likely discover that many persons we foreknew on earth are missing. The lack of their presence in Heaven can only mean that they are in Hell; for, there is no other alternative possible. Many will discover that at least one beloved friend or intimately-loved family member is not there. The momentary sense of loss would likely be shocking, especially so if that missing one was an intimately beloved spouse.

Fortunately, the above scenario will not actually be realized as we just stated, for all sorrow, crying, and pain over former things will have permanently passed away with the old creation. God will be there at our side to comfort and wipe away all tears from our eyes even before they form, as we discover that the memory of all things upon earth will have already faded away, as if they had never been (cf. Re. 21:4). God's great love for us, and our love for Him, will be so overwhelming, that it will dissolve away any and all our remaining concerns about our former earthly lives in his divine presence.

Hence, the strange notion that the spirits of loved ones, who may have gone before us into Heaven,[725] are looking down upon us who remain on earth from those lofty heights is without merit. Those in Heaven do not take any interest in the affairs of this world, nor could they exert any favorable influence over our circumstances or direct our actions here on the earth if they did.

This false notion often leads to ancestor worship in which men and women not only worship and pray to the dead, but are often deluded into attempting direct communication with them through various satanic mediums. In attempting to communicate with the departed dead, men and women establish communication with demons instead who emulate the voices of the departed. Through their satanic influence, those demons seek to lead men and women away from worship of the One

[725]It is falsely assumed by many of the reprobate that all men and women who die go to Heaven regardless of the sinful lives they may have lived here upon the earth; and of their complete lack of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who alone is able to supply full redemption from sin that is necessary to permit their entry into Heaven.

True God, who alone is worthy of their worship, prayers, and praise, thus driving them farther and farther away from receiving true redemption from sin, which is abundantly available in Christ alone.

The Exalted Position of Redeemed Man in Heaven

The disastrous fall of Adam had prevented man from fulfilling his intended purpose because of prevailing iniquity both within themselves and in the world about them. As long as Lucifer's iniquity remained within the human race, man was unable to lay claim to the high calling in which they would one day judge Lucifer's fallen angels (i.e. demons) and replace them in Heaven, for man was also deeply infested with their iniquity.[726]

The arrival of Christ, the second Adam, who is both fully man and fully God changed all of that. Whereas Lucifer was a mere creature and was thereby subject to self-corruption,[727] Jesus Christ is the Eternal God incarnated within human flesh – the perfect man in which iniquity and rebellion can not come about.

Through his atoning sacrificial death, Christ fully absolved an elect portion of Adam's fallen race of their iniquity, and had thereby fully redeemed them to fulfill the high calling and intended purpose that God had preordained for them. Through the divine headship of Christ, man will have ultimately succeeded in rendering the unfailing worship, loyalty, and service to God that the fallen angels (i.e. demons) through the rebellious pride of Lucifer, their head, had arrogantly refused to do.

Man's Purpose Realized in Glorious Works

> **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things** *done* **in**

[726]cf. 1Co. 6:3; Article, The Mystery of Iniquity, page 569.

[727]cf. The Inferiority of the Creature to the Creator, page 575.

> *his* **body, according to that he hath done, whether** *it be* **good or bad"** (2Co. 5:10).

When the redeemed stand before the judgment seat of Christ, some will be rewarded more than others for the works they have performed in his Name while upon the earth. Nevertheless, those good works had been established and enabled in us by the grace of God and exercised in us by the Holy Spirit, such that they cannot be attributable to any human effort on our part:

> **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them** (Ep.2:10).

This means that the atonement will not be more effectual for some of the saints than others, for every saint will be "filled up" according to his or her capacity to receive it. We all have but responded to the impulse of the Holy Spirit living within us to perform the works that God had required of us – lest we should boast of our accomplishments and fall into the iniquity of self-pride, as did Lucifer.

Hence, there will be no positional or ideological jealousy among us in Heaven. Those who have received less to accomplish will not envy those who have accomplished more, nor will those who have received more look down on those who have received less, for we each have been designed to accomplish the specific tasks we found at hand according to the will of God.

Our personal relationships in Heaven will be so greatly infused with Truth that we will not experience any variations in thought concerning theological matters that we may have once held as mortals here on earth; nor will there be any intellectual conflicts between us of any kind. All of that ambivalence will have been resolved in the bright light of perfectly revealed Truth, for then "we shall know as we are fully known" (1Co.13:12). Truly, it will be easier to live with the "saints above" than with the saints we live with here upon the earth, because we will all have been fully translated into the new eternal state of being wherein previous conflicts no longer matter or exist.

At the judgment seat of Christ, we will all be given specific tasks to accomplish as rewards that are commensurate with the service we have rendered for Him here on earth. The tasks and authorities we receive will vary considerably; those who have accomplished little for Christ or have erred in their service on earth will be assigned simpler tasks to perform and less to rule over, while those who have accomplished much for Him will be assigned greater tasks and rule over much. None will be given less than their ability, nor will any be given more than their ability to accomplish.

While greater tasks and responsibilities are more to be desired to provide greater service to God in Heaven, every task will be important to Him. There will be no envy, jealousy, or pride among the redeemed, for those that have been given little to do and to rule over will rejoice in their ability to accomplish it just as much as those who have been given much more to do and to rule over.

Therefore, the ability of redeemed man to work will continue on in Heaven, but without the heavy burden of sin and resultant failure it had produced on earth because of prevailing iniquity. In that supreme quality of work, mankind shall both glorify and worship God through Christ as their exalted head in an intimate way that all of God's loyal angels cannot do, and which Lucifer and his demons through their rebellious nature had utterly refused to do.

In Heaven, we will be able to produce wondrously creative artifacts and accomplish various other wondrous things that will both glorify God and fulfill our own need for rewarding accomplishment. Work will not be toilsome, but will be very pleasant, joyous, and mutually satisfying both to man and to God. Moreover, there will be no fear of failure as we go about our assigned tasks since we shall know no physical or intellectual restraints to hinder our work in the Heavenly Realm.

The Joyful, Fulfilling, Worship of God

No mortal man can see the face of God the Father and live (cf. Ex. 33:20). Therefore, upon this present-day earth, we worship God in

the abstract, most often through prayers, hymns, and songs of redemption. We also worship Him through the study of his written Word. Nevertheless, we cannot actually see Him except in deep shadow through the cloudy eyes of our minds. Try as we may, we cannot ever reach the supreme level of worship that God requires and deserves, because his spiritual essence seems so far removed from our mortal understanding.

Only through the Lord Jesus Christ can we hope to reach a personal understanding of God the Father; but even then, we can only see Christ as the Holy Spirit within us makes Him real to us through Holy Scripture. As the Apostle Paul stated concerning our current condition, we are ineffectively looking at God through a cloudy mental lens. But in Heaven, we shall clearly see Him face-to-face; we shall objectively know Him in an intimate personal way – even as He fully knows us (cf. 1Co.13:12). God will no longer be viewed as an abstract being beyond our comprehension; for then, we shall experience the glory of his being in such a way that it will captivate all our thinking.

Therefore, worshiping God and serving Him in Heaven will not be some dull ritual or boring never-ending ceremony within the throne-room of God, as some would suppose. Indeed, we shall desire to frequently appear there before Him, for the experience will be very exciting, and perpetually refreshing to our souls.

In Heaven, redeemed immortal man will at long last be able to fulfill the high standard and calling of perfection that God had required of him (cf. Mt.5:48), such that he may then receive his ultimate great reward and position that God had preordained for him to hold even before the day that Adam was created.[728] In Heaven, man shall at long last achieve his chief end and purpose, which is to "glorify God and to enjoy Him forever!"[729] ■

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[728]cf. Article The Mystery of Iniquity, Man's Future Absolution and Great Reward, page 588.

[729]cf. *Westminster Confession of Faith,* answer to Question 1 of the Shorter Catechism: "What is the chief end of man?"

Epilogue

With the final words of the Revelation, God has said all that He intends to say to men and women in this age; and as we have seen, He has told us so much that it is difficult for us to fully grasp it all. For that reason, the reprobate will continue to regard it as mere foolishness to their everlasting peril. Nevertheless, it has been written and preserved for the edification of God's Elect that they may discern the times in which we currently live relative to the momentous events prophesied within this ancient document.

Current Signs of the Times

As we evidenced within the Preamble to this book, there are very sound reasons to believe that we are presently living near the end of this current age, since the world is already deeply immersed in religious apostasy and wallowing in incredible moral corruption. The final advance into total political anarchy is well underway, such that it is entirely conceivable that one day soon the establishment of a global dictatorship will necessarily come about through a failed effort to subdue global chaos through an enforced peace.

Long before that occurs, however, there will be many signs that inform us that the end of the current age is drawing near. The rapid transition from grace to law at Jesus' second advent has been preordained to occur at a time that God the Father has preordained. As Jesus said concerning this rapid transition,

> **"[36]But of that day and hour knoweth no** *man,* **no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. [37]But as the days of Noe** *were,* **so shall also the coming of the Son of man be"** (Mt. 24:36,37).

No mortal man can know in advance the precise day nor the exact hour signaling the end of this age with the return of Jesus Christ. As in the days of Noah, man's iniquity will increasingly grow worse and worse, until this rapid transition suddenly occurs catching the ungodly

unprepared and without warning. However, the Elect of God shall be prepared by various signs as was Noah. Noah was informed by God to construct a great Ark on dry land in preparation for the great deluge that was coming. Once the Ark was completed, the animals came to him two-at-a-time, and the skies slowly darkened such that Noah knew the time was very near. Then, at the time appointed, Noah faithfully entered into the ark and closed the door on a passing age.

In like manner, there will be indications that the day and hour transitioning from the present age of grace forward to the Kingdom age of law is rapidly approaching, many of which are already evident in today's world:

Israel as an Early Sign

Jesus metaphorically spoke of Israel as a "fig tree" in his Olivet Discourse (cf. Mt.24:32-34).[730] Presently, we see the "tender branches" of prophetic promise as but an early sign of the Israel to come. For, today's Israel is presently governed as a Zionist[731] political democracy, not a theocracy, inasmuch as she has not yet accepted Jesus Christ as her true Messiah and eternal King.[732]

Since the Roman destruction of the Ancient nation of Israel in AD 70, the Jew had been dispersed throughout the populations of some seventy host nations, where they had most often been severely persecuted. Modern Israel was established as a political nation in AD 1948 in an attempt to resolve that dilemma, and ever since that time many Jews have been slowly returning from their dispersion into their ancient homeland.

Nevertheless, the nation of Israel is hated and surrounded by powerful satanically-inspired enemies who seek to obliterate her from the face of the earth. In response, Israel has grown into a powerful military force,

[730]cf. Parable of the Fig Tree as a Sign, page 553.

[731]Zionism is a political movement begun in the late 19th Century by world Jewry to establish a Jewish state within the region of Palestine.

[732]That acceptance will most assuredly come to pass as this current age on earth draws to a rapid close. (cf. Commentary, The Lamb and the 144,000, page 295).

such that she has been enabled to withstand the satanic onslaught for a yet undetermined period of time. Even as we write this Epilogue, Israel is in a life or death struggle with the Iranian-backed terrorist organization Hamas in Gaza.[733]

At a future time that God has appointed, political Israel will be overwhelmed and deceived by the political Antichrist as he ascends to power.[734] Israel will foolishly sign a pact with the Antichrist that will enable her to complete construction of a Third Temple in Jerusalem[735] and for a time return to the blasphemous practice of animal sacrifice[736] – until the Antichrist breaks that pact and places the dreaded Abomination of Desolation[737] within the Third Temple's Holy of Holies. At that point in time, the nation of Israel will be broken up through a mass exodus of Jews from the land to a hidden place of safety that God will have prepared for them.

[733] On October 7th 2023, Hamas had mounted a heinous surprise attack from Gaza on Israeli civilians by land, air, and sea under a massive rocket barrage. Many unarmed settlers in southern Israel were savagely slaughtered while attending an open-air music festival, while still others were burned alive in bomb shelters or in their "safe rooms" by Hamas militants using rocket propelled grenades (RPGs). Israeli babies were summarily beheaded or burned alive while many women were repeatedly raped before they were killed. The Israeli civilian death toll was reportedly above 1400 and the wounded was well into the thousands. Moreover, around 240 men, women and children were captured and taken to Gaza to be used as "bargaining chips" and human shields against an expected retaliatory invasion by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), which began on October 27th. As we conclude this book on the Revelation, it can be assumed that Hamas will soon be defeated militarily, but antisemitism will most likely arise up again through a reconstituted Hamas or most assuredly through still other terrorist organizations – until Jesus Christ, Israel's true Messiah, arrives to establish the Millennial age upon the earth.

[734] cf. Commentary, The Great Messiah-Delusion, page 289.

[735] cf. Third Temple of the Last Days, page 516.

[736] This practice of animal blood sacrifice defies the all-sufficient sacrifice of the precious blood of Christ that was offered once for all sin, thus rendering any continuation of animal sacrifice a blasphemous act.

[737] cf. Commentary, The Abomination of Desolation, page 290.

Israel of the coming Millennial Age will be a totally reformed absolute theocracy established with a faithful remnant of sealed, resurrected, and saved Jews in the last days, having no direct political continuity with present-day Israel. The Kingdom will be benevolently but forcibly ruled over by Jesus Christ, their true Messiah, with a rod of iron; and all of the Gentile nations on earth will bow down before Him.[738]

False Teachers and False Gospels Abound

Although Israel represents a significant sign, it is but one of many visible signs indicating the approach of the end of this age. False teachers abound at large and within many of today's churches, who are preaching false "gospels" that adulterate the meaning of the True Gospel of salvation. This adulterated "gospel" is powerless to reach and save the lost who continue to wander in darkness. At the same time, theological errors of every imaginable kind abounds, wrecking men's minds to the extent that they cannot differentiate the Truth from the false teaching of deluded secularists who have in great numbers captured church pulpits.

Many true Christians, who still diligently spread the "good news" of Jesus' free offer of redemption, are being mocked, betrayed, hated, and often killed for his very namesake,[739] even as they patiently contemplate their ultimate deliverance within the upcoming Rapture.

The Gospel to be Preached to the Ends of the Earth

In spite of the mendacious rhetoric of many false prophets' teaching to the contrary, the True Gospel of salvation is being systematically preached in all the world by godly men, as a witness to all that have an "ear to hear," in order to reach all of the chosen before this current age of grace is concluded and the Millennial age of Law must begin. So diligent is this current effort that it has been estimated that the Gospel of salvation will have reached every man and woman alive on earth by the calendar year AD 2033. Assuming that to be so, the Great Commission

[738]cf. Article, The Millennial Age on Earth, page 614.

[739]The reprobate are greatly offended by the mere mention of Jesus' name.

given to the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ just before his ascension will have been accomplished (cf. Mt. 28:19,20), such that the fulfilling of the primary purpose for the Church having remained upon the earth could soon end thereafter in her Rapture.

The Gospel of the Coming Kingdom Age

Even so, the Gospel of salvation has a second aspect to it pertaining to the Jew that must also be realized before the current age of grace comes to a close:

> **And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"** (Mt. 24:14).

In context, the "gospel of the Kingdom" as it is stated here refers to the "good news" regarding the coming Kingdom Age, the glad tidings of which will be preached to all peoples upon the earth; and only then shall the end come. The end that shall come refers to the end of this current age, following which the Lord Jesus Christ shall return to establish his Millennial Kingdom age upon the earth.

The Great Explosion of Iniquity

As we near the end of this age of grace, Satan's iniquity will encompass the earth. In today's world, the nations of the earth continue to rage against God's Anointed King without just cause, even as they insanely attempt to usurp his royal throne for themselves. In their great vanity, Truth is being abandoned, to be foolishly replaced with the salacious lies of the evil one. In the heat of this battle against Truth many once-trusted men of faith are fearfully surrendering holy ground, rather than standing fast against the great onslaught. As evil continues to triumph over good, the glorious gift of God's Son, given to redeem mankind's rapidly decaying world from Satan's iniquity, is foolishly being cast away by men as nonsensical drivel.

None of this explosion of iniquity that we are already experiencing should have been unexpected, for the Apostle Paul had warned the

Church that in the last days perilous times would come as prideful arrogant men would seek to elevate themselves above God who had created them for his divine purpose:

> **"[2]For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, [3]without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, [4]Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; [5]Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. [6]For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, [7]ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"** (2Ti. 3:2-7).

In verses 2 thru 4 we perceive the current prideful secular movement away from God, and in verses 5 thru 7 we perceive the religious apostacy that has already overwhelmed so many of today's churches as ungodly secularism has invaded their pulpits through men who had an outward appearance of godliness, but had inwardly renounced the very power of God that they had claimed.

These ungodly men have led foolish women astray by sanctifying their sins;[740] and further satisfying their lust for power, have given them leadership roles over men. These women are ever-learning new things; yet in their ungodly state of mind, they are never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth; but must remain in secular darkness, even as they disperse that darkness upon the unwary pseudo-Christian.

The Need to Put on the Whole Armour of God

As the end of this age draws ever closer, godly men and women will need to endure even more hateful afflictions perpetuated against them by the ungodly who will politically rule over the entire earth under Satan's

[740]cf. Mass Murder of the Unborn, page 43, and Newsletter Article July 2022.

authority through the Antichrist. Nevertheless, those who with great patience hold to the Truth and endure this abuse unto the very end shall be saved (cf. Mt. 24:13).

As the darkness of the great apostasy deepens still further, those who are in Christ must stand fast in the Truth as they patiently watch and wait – knowing that the day of God's judgment of sin and the final eradication of all iniquity is near at hand. For that reason the Apostle Paul implored us to...

> **"[11]Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. [12]For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high** *places.* **[13]Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand** (Ep. 6:11-13).

While taking up the whole armor of God in defense, we must remain both firm and active in the True Faith during this momentous struggle against the rulers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places of authority, such that we may stand firm against the wiles of Satan who continually seeks to undo us.

We now return to the little epistle of Jude,[741] wherein he also prophesied concerning this current iniquitous period of the last days:

> **[17]But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; [18]how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. [19]These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit"** (Jude vv. 17-19).

The Apostles had warned us of these troubling times.[742] Therefore, we must not listen to those religious rulers who claim spiritual authority,

[741]cf. Preamble to the Revelation, page 31.

but are ungodly, sensual mockers of the Faith, walking after their own lusts, and not having the Holy Spirit living within them. These are opponents of Christ (i.e. antichrists) "who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" living within them.

Jude then admonishes believers concerning the firm stand those in Christ must take during the days of great apostasy in the concluding words of his epistle:

> **[20]But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, [21]keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. [22]And of some have compassion, making a difference: [23]And others save with fear, pulling** *them* **out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh** (Jude vv. 20-23).

As the redeemed of God, we must persevere in the Faith as it was first given to us through the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ – never wavering, never doubting – while disregarding all of the ungodly who in their iniquitous ignorance would mock or subvert the Faith.

We must diligently seek to build ourselves up in the knowledge of the Faith by delving deeply into Holy Scripture – reading and diligently studying all of God's Word from Genesis through the Revelation. Having done so, we must consistently apply the Word of God to every aspect of our daily walk here on earth. In doing so, we shall find that the Holy Scriptures are a mighty fortress within which we can stand secure against the gainsayers of God and his Word.

As the darkness of the great apostasy deepens still further, we must be continually in prayer through the indwelling Holy Spirit. We must pray that God will enable us to hold fast to the faith even through times of great trial and persecution, and that He will remember mercy as the day of his great wrath finally comes upon the earth.

We must keep ourselves fully centered in the love of Christ, and through fulfilling the Great Commission that He has placed upon us, we

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[742]cf. Ac. 20:29-31; 2Ti. 3:1; 1Jn. 2:18; 2Jn. 1:7.

must diligently seek out the lost with the Gospel of salvation. We must have compassion on some who are in doubt and are wavering in their faith under great pressure; and differentiating them from the reprobate, seek to confirm them in the Truth of God's Word.

As for others who are on the very brink of falling away into despair and ruination, we must with great risk to our own comfort reach out to pull them back from the fiery judgment to come. We must carefully do so even as we despise their outer conduct that has been greatly soiled by the works of the flesh, lest we become complicit in their sinful actions.

Final Words

> **"[24]Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present** *you* **faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, [25]to the only wise God our Saviour,** *be* **glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen** (Jude vv. 24,25).

None can lay a successful charge against God's Elect whom God has justified and for whom Christ has died and risen and makes continual intercession for them at the right hand of God the Father (cf. Ro.8:22,34). Even in the midst of great trials, Jesus Christ is able to keep us from falling away that we may one day joyously stand before Him without fault or wrinkle, in great joy. For, God our savior in his great wisdom has established that in Jesus Christ alone is salvation, glory, wisdom, majesty, dominion, and power forever.

With the echoing assurance of Jude's benediction in closing, I humbly pray that this commentary and analysis of the Revelation will prove to be of some value to today's disciples of God's Word – first to the believing Jew living in the last days, but especially so to future Bible-believing Christians as they must face the tumultuous last days on earth just prior to the victorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ to rescue his beloved Bride, his Church.

Until that great day when we of the promise shall all stand together as one before Him in all of his glory, may God bless you and keep you

secure within the ever-abiding love of Christ Jesus and the Truth of his Word. ***Amen***. ■

APPENDIX

Glossary of Words and Terms

Advent: the arrival of that which has been long awaited; in the biblical sense, the arrival of Christ. His first advent was through his incarnation in human flesh, and his second advent speaks of his physical return in the Millennium to establish his Kingdom on earth.

Adam: Hebrew = '*âdâ m*. the first man (*îysh*) created by God from the dust of the ground and made alive through the breath of his Spirit.

Apostasy: a willful deliberate rejection and falling away from the true faith by those who had previously received, understood, and intellectually accepted it as God's Truth, yet had never been redeemed through a new birth in the Holy Spirit.

Baptism: Greek = *baptisma,* 1) an immersion in the Holy Spirit constituting a spiritual rebirth and a new spiritual nature; 2) a ceremonial immersion of a professed believer in water, serving to signify a person's identification with Christ 3) an immersion or application of water serving to identify a person with a local church congregation or denomination.

Biblical Theology: the study of the doctrines of the Bible exactly as recorded with respect to their chronology and historical context, without requiring them to conform to an externally applied systematic narrative or discipline.

Canon: A "canon" is defined as a group of written documents that have been recognized by ecclesiastical authority as inspired sacred text, all of which have been assembled together to make up the Protestant Bible.

Church: the called out assembly of elect believers belonging to Christ.

Churchianity: worship of the organized church and its trappings as opposed to the true worship of Christ.

Covenant: a specific agreement that God has made with mankind to teach and discipline them such that they may conform to his divine law and will.

Covenantalism: an interpretive method of understanding Scripture

based upon the precise wording and strict meaning of the covenants that God has enacted with mankind (cf. Covenantalism, page 447).

Day of the Lord: a 3½ year period beginning in spiritual darkness, immediately after the Church has been removed from the earth, in which God vents his wrath through a series of seven extremely intense trumpet judgments.

Denominationalism: a pejorative separation of the one true Church into various factions based upon narrow beliefs concerning proper practice and the purpose, and the precise meaning of Holy Scripture.

Dispensation: the way in which God interacts with mankind regarding specific covenants that He has enacted with them (cf. Dispensation Defined, page 460).

Dispensationalism: a systematic interpretation of Scripture based upon the specific order and divine purpose of administrated economies (i.e. dispensations) following and between God's revealed Covenants with man as they are strictly managed and enforced by Him (cf. Addendum Article, Dispensationalism, on page 460).

Doctrine: the body of teaching obtained from the Holy Scriptures that is based upon God's revealed precepts and principles.

Ecumenism: a secular desire to combine and reorganize all Christian denominations and individual churches into one universal church by blending and bending individually held beliefs far beyond their breaking point. In the zealous drive for unity, the Holy Bible is considered to be without authority and thus irrelevant in today's world.

Elect: those whom God has preordained to receive salvation in Christ in a spiritual rebirth through the Holy Spirit. Conversely, those who have accepted salvation in Christ in accordance with his Word and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

Eschatology: the biblical study and exposition of the doctrines of the last days of man on earth as they are interpreted from Holy Scripture.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI): An Artificial Intelligence system that is capable of generating text, images, or other media in response to human interrogation. They do so by learning the patterns

and structures of data provided by human trainers, and then generate new data having similar characteristics from existing language data stored within Large Language Models (LLM).

Gospel: The "good news" of redemption from sin and its consequences that is freely offered in Christ through his death, burial, and resurrection on their behalf.

Gospel of the Kingdom: the "good news" concerning the coming establishment of the Millennial Kingdom Age upon the earth.

Hades: Greek word for the Hebrew word *Sheol*; see Sheol.

Immanency Doctrine: the belief in an immanent instantaneous return of Christ to the earth without any warning, sign, or preamble.

Iniquity: a rebellious prideful state of mind first found in the archangel Lucifer that leads to all forms of moral corruption, wickedness, and utter depravity in men that he has infected (cf. Iniquity, page 571).

Large Language Model (LLM): A computer database consisting of a neural interconnected network containing extremely large quantities of unlabeled text, and utilizing self-supervised, or semi-supervised, learning to .perform a wide variety of tasks through natural language processing (see GAI).

Man: The English word "man" is translated from *ı̂ysh* or *'ȃdȃ m* in Hebrew (cf. Ge. 1:26), whom God had created as both male and female (cf. Ge.1:27). The female, whom Adam called Eve, was taken from out of the side of Adam (cf. Woman). For that reason, we often find in Hebrew Scripture that the English word "man" represents "Adam" as a singular bipartite unity that also includes his other half-self, Eve. By logical extension, it describes a married man and his wife subsisting together as one single entity.

Mankind: (See "Man"). While the English word "mankind" is sometimes used to specify both men and women together as one (cf. Jb. 12:10; Ja. 3:7), the more specific translation describes only the entire male genesis, excluding the female genesis (cf. Le. 18:22; 1Co.6:9; 1Ti.1:10)**.**

Millennium: a word meaning a span of one-thousand years, which is

used to refer to the future thousand-year age in which the Lord Jesus Christ will personally rule upon the earth (cf. The Millennial Age page 381).

Millennialism: the belief in a future thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ upon the earth in the last days just before the eternal ages of man begin in Heaven.

New Birth: to be spiritually born anew (or born again) by the power of God through the agency of the Holy Spirit who comes to permanently indwell the believer in Christ as their guide, comforter and advocate.

Paradise: a region within Sheol/Hades that had temporarily housed the souls of Old-Covenant saints awaiting Christ's resurrection and ascension (cf. Paradise, page 601).

Preterism: the belief that all of the prophecies found in the Revelation have already been fulfilled in history – commonly viewed as having ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (cf. Preterism, page 452).

Prophecy: the inspired revelation given through God's prophets concerning events yet future that must come to pass through God's express authority at the time He has appointed.

Prophesy: the inspired forth-telling of the Word of God as He has directed it to be revealed through certain men chosen to be his spokesmen (i.e. the Old-Covenant prophets).

Pseudo-Christian: a term that we use to describe professing Christians who are not genuine, but are merely going through the motions of religion. While they may closely emulate the activities of Christians, they have not been born again from above. Some Pseudo-Christians may actually be deluded into thinking that they are truly Christians, while others hypocritically know that they are not, yet choose to fellowship among Christians for various social or economic benefits it affords them.

Rapture: an English word derived from the Latin word *rapre* meaning rapid. Commonly used to depict the miraculous rapid transport of the Church off the earth to be with Christ just before God

begins to vent his righteous wrath upon the ungodly of the earth in the last days (cf. Addendum Article The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church page 492).

Replacement Theology: the erroneous belief of Covenantilists that the Church has replaced Israel in the mind of God, such that the many blessings God had intended for Israel have now been inherited by the Church (cf. Replacement Theology, page 450).

Reprobate: a term defining a man or woman who has reached a state of total depravity; those whom God has necessarily abandoned to their own sin, such that their redemption is no longer possible. When we use it throughout this book, it defines those whom God has condemned for their unrepentant sin and are thus predestined to receive eternal punishment in Hell.

Reprobation: a state of being that has come about as a consequence of man's rejection of God, and the exclusion of his divine laws from all human thought processes. Inasmuch as they have fully rejected Him, God is left with no means through which to intervene. He must surrender them to wallow in their corrupted nature, which leads them into ever greater depths of depravity.

Sheol: An intermediate place temporarily housing the souls of the dead awaiting final judgment – sharply divided into two separate regions known as Paradise for the souls of the Old-Covenant redeemed, and a place of extreme anguish for the reprobate (cf. Illustration 10, page 600).

Sin: anything that a creature of God thinks or does that is in opposition to God's divine purpose that He has intended for them. This constitutes a violation of God's divine law that carries along with it the penalty of eternal death.

Soteriology: a study of the means God uses to bring salvation to his Elect through their ultimate conformity with Christ.

Temporal Church: The term "temporal church," as we use it in this work, specifically applies to earth-bound time-bound institutionally organized churches, which may or may not have a flourishing number of genuine Christian believers present within their congregations.

Theology: the systematic study of God, and the means that He utilizes to interact with his creation.

Time: Time exists in two domains or dimensions, which can be referred to as earth-time and a celestial-continuum: Earth-time is based upon a reoccurring sequence of physical events, defined by movements and positioning of the earth with respect to the sun, moon, and the visible stars. Those movements are interpreted as days, months, years, and seasons that can be counted; and the intervals between them can be measured by calendars and clocks. The Celestial-continuum is a linear series of supernatural events constantly moving in one direction forever without beginning or end. Because it is eternal, it cannot be subdivided into intervals that can be reckoned by clocks or calendars. Earth-time is a created subset of the celestial-continuum, and as such, has a beginning and an end.

Tribulation: a catastrophic series of events including severe mental trials, physical afflictions, and extreme persecution. In the biblical sense, a brief period of time just prior to the return of Christ in his second Advent (cf. The Great Tribulation on page 202).

Woman: Hebrew = *'ishshaâ h.* The human female counterpart of Adam, whom he called Eve (Heb: *chavvaâ h* = "life giver"). Eve, was not directly created, but was taken out of the side of Adam. She became the mother of all of Adam's offspring that now cover the earth.

World: in the biblical sense, everything that exists by the will and agency of God, including Heaven, the cosmos, the earth, and all that He has created including humankind. God's world has no beginning or end, being eternal as is God Himself.

Worldview: a mental perspective or comprehensive view of the world of humankind. Two major opposing views currently coexist: 1) a theological worldview in which all that exists within the world including mankind is seen as a divine creation of God. 2) a secular worldview, which envisions the world and mankind as having evolved over eons of time by strictly natural processes totally apart from any divine Creator.

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