

## SCROLL of REVELATION PDF 2

### 4. The things which will take place after this (6-22)

We enter now the third and final part of the outline. It seems like a totally discussion emerges, but there is *no* chapter division between 5 and 6. Let's review what we have seen so far:

1. John is sent by Domitian to a penal colony on the deserted island of Patmos.
2. While there, Jesus appears to him and tells him to write to seven churches in Asia.
3. He writes the messages that we see in chapters 2 and 3.
4. John is then invited to join Jesus in Heaven, and while there he is introduced to a sealed book.
5. Jesus then comes forth to unseal that book, one seal at a time.
6. Chapter 6 is the unsealing of six of the seven seals.

Generally speaking then, the rest of the book is part three of the Lord's outline for John (1:19). Here is where the going gets tough. Here is where sequential methods of book-reading will not work. Part three starts with chapter six, which speaks of the opening of six of the seven seals.

It is critical to see the relationship between the three sets of seven judgment happenings. First to remember is that the seals (all of chapter 6, and 8:1-6) cover *all*. Then the trumpets (8:7-11:19) recap and give close-ups of the latter *seals*. The bowls (15-16) are a close-up of the final *trumpet*. There is much overlapping and repetition, so as to include more and more details, *but not more elapsed time*. Chapters 7, 12-14, and 17-22, give *background material* to help us understand what is going on while the judgments of God and the wrath of Satan fall on the earth.

**a. The first six seals (6:1-17)**

**Seals one through four (6:1-8).** Jesus opens all seven seals. The first four seals are further introduced by one living creature each. The living creatures are given a number and a name in 4:7. Their number only is referred to in the chapter before us. Seal one is introduced by the lion, two by the calf/ox, three by “man”, and four by the eagle. But the connection from these four horsemen to the living creatures is further strengthened in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezekiel 1 and 10). There, the same creatures that John sees here are described, with the addition of the mysterious “wheels”. Ezekiel’s wheel vision is somehow tied in to the end time by way of John’s revelation of the living creatures, and the four horsemen. I believe there is an interpretation that will make perfect sense when the time is right. Scales will fall off someone’s eyes and the truth will manifest itself. God would not tantalize His people with a vision of no meaning.

**Zechariah 6 mentions horses** of the same hue as the ones described here, albeit in a different order. And while we’re looking at Biblical precedents for the four horsemen, it might be interesting to see that the number four is used elsewhere significantly: There are the “four winds of heaven” spoken of in 7:1, and by Jesus in Matthew 24. There are the four corners and quarters of the earth in 7:1 and 20:8. Four angels are stationed there. There are four horns on the altar in Heaven, 9:13, and four angels at the Euphrates River. An important number.

I believe that these first four seals should be viewed as a unit, separate from the other three, because of the connections mentioned above, and because of the significance of the number four.

I also believe now that all six seals are still in our future. Why? Look at the outline in 1:19. We have seen the things that John saw in chapter 1. We have seen the things that are – present tense – in the churches and in the heavens. Now we are seeing, as evidenced by the dramatic buildup of chapters 4 and 5, things that are in our future. A time is coming when the final series of events of earth’s history will begin to unfold before us. The book is now about those things.

**Seal 1 (6:1-2), The world conqueror.** The events of the scroll begin with one conqueror. They end with Another (chapter 19). The unnamed world leader of the first seal is replaced

permanently, eventually by the Son of God. Both appear on the world scene with a white horse (19:11). Both bring destruction to the planet. The destruction of the former we know of as the Tribulation. The latter Horseman ushers in the ultimate wrath of God, and then a new Heaven and earth. All of this, from antichrist to Christ, is found in one chapter!

At least, that is the traditional explanation of the white horse, and it is quite believable. But it is fair, I think, to suggest an alternate idea to the interpretation of this white horse figure. Deeper probing into the Book lets us know that there will be another ruler of world-wide proportions *before* antichrist sits on his throne. We will speak more of him later. It seems possible to me that this conqueror with “no arrows” (6:2) may be a man of peace and that nations bow to him because of his great political charisma. Perhaps he is the one who has resolved the Middle East crises, and an appreciative world brings him to power, marking the beginning of the seven-year countdown. Perhaps he reigns the *first* three- and one-half years.

Still, the image of one going out conquering and to conquer does not sound like a man of peace. I’ll leave you to do some homework on this if you wish. I will lean toward this being the man of sin himself. 13:7, Daniel 8:24, 11:41.

There is an interesting parallel between Revelation 6 and Matthew 24. Could the four horsemen be “the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:8) mentioned by Jesus, the clue that we are at the very end of history? Some of course see all these things of Matthew and the first four seals happening *today* and in all generations for that matter. A preview of all history. But, at least speaking for Matthew’s account, Jesus was being asked a very specific question. It was a request for Him to spell out the signs of His coming and the *end* of the age.

Though many will come in His Name, and wars will be constant, along with poverty, there will be, according to John’s vision here, one in particular that will come, sparking the final series of wars and plagues.

Summary. A powerful man/government arises, is given worldwide authority, and uses its power to establish that authority by force. Think Hitler.

### **Seal two (6:3-4), War.**

Another seal. Another living creature. Another horse. Another color.

The first four seals are the famed “four horsemen of the Apocalypse” and signal the beginning of antichrist’s world conquest and the world’s reaction against it. All does not remain peaceful very long, if indeed we have correctly assumed that they began in peace. Seal two seems to match Matthew 24:6-7. Though the new Hitler/antichrist is incredibly powerful and has enacted awful laws already, he seems to be struggling to gain a permanent foothold. People in some quarters

react. Daniel tells of those in the east and in the north giving him trouble. So does John. Later.

Summary: A World War erupts as a reaction against the man of sin.

**Seal three (6:5-6), incredible poverty.** Inflationary trends are so high that a man will gladly give a day's wage for a measure of wheat roughly akin to our quart. The directive not to "harm the oil and the wine" may be given to an angel, similar to the instructions given in 7:3 and 9:4. There is a perfect timing to all that is about to follow. It has been thought by some that the saving of "luxuries" like oil and wine in a time of such poverty points to an elite class hoarding all the good things, as ruling parties always do. There certainly is abundance on the planet, with no reason for any to suffer, unless so cursed by their fellow man. Matthew 24:7b may come into play here.

Summary: The ongoing war decimates the economy. Extreme scarcity sets in. Consider Ukraine today, or other nations involved in conflicts such as these.

**Seal four (6:7-8), Death.** The sword is the common form of killing in John's Day and for so much of history. We assume that modern swords are included here, although there are certainly primitive areas of earth where swords clash. The beasts of the earth will enter in, as they did, for example in AD 200-300 during the major lessening of population caused by the Civil War of the Roman Empire (per *Halley's Bible Handbook*). Again see Matthew 24:7b.

Summary: **One fourth** of the world is affected by this war. Whether dying in battle, or by starvation, or by disease, or by the ravages of wild animals, *two billion people will be under control*, based on present world statistics.

As I said, these four riders, the first four seals, are a unit. Why aren't there five or six horsemen since there are six seals? I believe there is a break in the continuity of the unsealing here. The next seals already are taking us back, or deeper, into the events depicted. We have seen the main event of the Tribulation already: A World War sparked by the man of sin leading to ¼ of the world's population being controlled. But there's more.

**Seal five (6:9-11).** With the fifth seal, martyrdom, we are in the final portion of the Tribulation, as the martyrs already killed and with Jesus, but without their resurrected bodies, are told that it will be just a "little while" until their fellow servants will be joining them (**6:11**). (See Matthew 24:9-14 for a parallel account.) Notice John uses the same formulation of words that he used to describe *his own situation*: these are persons persecuted "for the Word of God and their testimony" (**6:9**, and 1:2, 9). These souls are linked to the believers again in 12:11. Here they are seen as overcomers, not by their exit route, but by what Jesus did for them, and their own testimony of it all.

I believe there is a break between the former and latter seals here. Conquerors conquer indiscriminately and for their own purposes. But when God's people are singled out specifically for harassment, evidently Satan has gained a firmer grip on things. This fits the picture of the Man of Sin, and the latter portion of the Tribulation.

Here possibly is our first case of non-sequential material in the book. After much reading, one begins to focus on themes and colors and ideas. This one could be labeled, "Persecution of the believers", and it is not only here, but also in 6:9-11, 7:9-17, 12:10-12, 12:17, 13:7. All of these verses show *the same picture* but from different perspectives.

**The fifth seal** is the first clear reference to a vibrant sainthood still on earth. The completion of the events described in the fifth seal is in the next chapter, verses 9-17. Suddenly many saints, innumerable in fact, from all over the world are with Jesus, and the specific means of their arrival is spelled out: they come out of the Great Tribulation (the only time those three words are used together in Scripture. There is Tribulation. There is Great Tribulation. Then there is *the great* Tribulation), very obviously martyred, as the Man of Sin (see chapter 13) goes on a rampage against the people of God. This matches clearly with 12:7-12, where Satan is cast out to earth and believers overcome Him by the blood, and by their testimony.

In 12:17, we are given the motivation for this persecution. Antichrist is frustrated about not being able to make the Jews an example of his new power and control (think Haman and Mordecai), so he vents his fury on the believers in Jesus. The rage of this "beast" sounds very much like the man Antiochus Epiphanes, who was known to take out his feelings on the Jews when defeated elsewhere. More of him later.

**The altar (6:9).** It is first mentioned in Revelation here, but it can be found also in 8:3-5, 9:13, 14:18, and 16:7. God's *Heavenly* altar. The place of sacrifice, the place of incense, the place of prayers. God's favorites are slain by madmen on earth but find their way to a safe location "under the altar", in other words, a sacrifice well pleasing unto God, having sealed their testimony with actions, and with death.

**On vengeance (6:10).** Notice that saints who are now with Jesus pray like David did, for vengeance. They have learned the perfect hatred of Heaven. They desire the full wrath of God to be poured out on those who refuse to repent. This must be our heart, with one important difference: We do not know, for the most part, who the terminally obstinate will be, and so while desiring God's justice, we are also asking for His mercy to be shown.

**The white robes (6:11).** Here, as in 3:4-5, 4:4, and 7:9, the permanent clothing of all God's overcoming saints. And 19:8 explains further that this robe, of the finest linen, represents the righteousness of the saints. Of course, that righteousness comes by virtue of Jesus Christ, Who is our righteousness. Paul in II Corinthians 5:21 explains that this righteousness is not really of our

making, but is acquired from Heaven. Philippians 3:9 assures us again that although we do have righteousness, its Source is outside us and beyond our capability to produce. So the robe is the reflection of Who Jesus is, not what we have done.

These victims of antichrist's rage are spirit beings at present. Their new body has not yet been given. John's eyes have been opened to the spirit world so effectively that he can see "souls". That creates a technical problem for us, because we see later when the resurrected bodies of the saints come back with Jesus, they are dressed in these white garments. But how can these "souls" be so dressed? We can only imagine that the robes are being kept in storage until that day when their new bodies, for which they groan here, are manifested.

In the end of this passage, the martyred saints are told to hang on a little while, because there are still more people to be martyred during this tribulation. That story continues in chapter 7, a wonderful addition and finish to the episode of martyrdom.

**Seal six (6:12-17).** Without a doubt, the sixth seal is "the end." From Matthew 24:15 on, there is also clearly a discussion of end time matters. And in Matthew 24:29 and following is the same pattern of events as here in Revelation: Heavenly signs. The earth in chaos. The coming to earth of Jesus. The day of His wrath. Saints with Him. All of this *follows* the persecution of believers during the Tribulation period.

Everything that happens at the trumpets or the bowls to follow, *all of it*, has already happened in the seals. We have come to the final return of Jesus already. There will be other things after that, told in the last chapters of the book, but the trumpets and the bowls to follow are only close-ups of things that have happened during these seven or three and one-half years. You have experienced the scroll of revelation when you have read chapter 6!

The earthquake **(6:12)**. Jesus pointed us to earthquakes in general, but the prophets, and John here, are singling out one enormous shaking at the very end of all things. Isaiah (2:19) saw a day when the Lord will shake the earth "mightily". This will be no ordinary quake. Ezekiel (38:19) describes a great earthquake in the land of Israel, where "mountains shall be thrown down, steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground." It fits also with Joel, who in Joel 3:16 prophecies a shaking of heaven and earth, along with the light-diminishing phenomena of the heavens, mentioned also in this seal. And it matches the prophet Haggai, who is quoted by the writer of Hebrews (Haggai 2:6, Hebrews 12:26): "Once more, I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land, I will shake all nations."

As I said, no ordinary earthquake. It is mentioned here in the sixth seal, and in 8:5 in the seventh seal. But remember, the seventh seal is nothing more than all seven trumpets, *which cover the same territory as the sixth seal*.

If there is more than one earthquake in the book, the second one (though first in real time) seems to appear in 11:13, which tells of a 'quake happening in the days of the sixth trumpet, in connection with the ascension of the two witnesses. But only six verses later, passing into the seventh trumpet, or the *end-of-all* phase again, there is another earthquake. In the first one (11:13), 7000 are killed. In the final one (11:19), further described in 16:18-19 as a part of the climactic bowl judgment (which also overlaps seals and trumpets), the events are as follows: "...there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city [Babylon?] was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell... and the mountains were not found."

We will see in later close-ups how man and Devil destroy much of the earth's people and culture. But here is a case of God Himself intervening and making a statement unaided.

**Shaking of the heavens (6:12-13).** The "statement" of God is further punctuated in this ending scene by a spectacular show in the heavenly bodies: sun, moon, and stars. Never was an event more fully documented in God's Word. Men like Isaiah (13:10, 24:23), Ezekiel (32:7), and Joel (2:10,31, 3:15), all saw a day when the brightness of things celestial would grow significantly dimmer. The same Spirit worked in them and in our Lord to point to that which John now describes. Jesus ties these events to His coming to earth, just after the Tribulation period (Matthew 24:29-30).

Later in the book we are given more details of how all these things work themselves out. In the trumpet days, 8:10, which take us backward into the seals, a star falls from heaven and does damage to the earth. We understand now the identity of "falling stars" as we still call them. These are meteors. Yes, they have fallen to earth before and will again. There are on the planet now over 100 craters that have been formed by the impact of giant meteors. Tons of outer space debris comes into our atmosphere every day. Most of it is burned up to insignificant size. But on that day, the meteor showers normally confined to great distances away from the planet will be bombarding us. Not only that, but one-third of the real stars (8:12) may be scheduled to nova, or burn out, at that time. This, again, is a common phenomenon, but the timing of it will be seen to be very precise, to fit in with the show of wrath being made. A third manifestation of the falling star is the angel (9:1). We saw early on (1:20) how Jesus sees angels as stars. Whatever that may mean, we do see a star being given the key to the bottomless pit after he, the star, "falls from heaven to earth".

Meteors, stars, angels, all falling in a concerted effort to demonstrate the power of an angry God.

Before a star totally burns out, it grows intensely hot. It would seem then that the fourth bowl judgment of chapter 16 in its description of scorched men, followed by the fifth bowl of

darkness, is nothing more or less than a depicting of this very thing. Evil is having its way, and the light of God is not allowed to shine on the planet any longer. But the prophet foresaw this moment (Isaiah 60:19-20), and God has comforted us to let us know that the artificial light bearers that we have come to respect daily will one day be replaced by the light of His presence (21:23, 22:5). *But we are way ahead of the story...*

**The sky and the surface of the earth (6:14).** It was Isaiah who first (34:4) was given the picture that John now portrays by the same Spirit. A time when the host of heaven would be dissolved. A time when the heavens would roll up like a scroll. A time when the falling of stars would be as fruit from a fig tree. Peter, also before John, sees the heavens passing away with a great noise, the elements melting, the earth and its works burned up (II Peter 3:10).

There is something of a dilemma in timing here. Peter follows his description with talk of the “new heaven and new earth.” But later in Revelation, that newness is not scheduled until after Jesus has ruled for 1000 years (20:11-21:1). Which is it, at the coming of Jesus, or at the end of His reign, that we see the new heavens and new earth?

There is no question that this sixth seal is pointing to the coming again of Jesus. The event begun here will be further considered in chapter 19. So, we read that when He comes, the earth will definitely be re-arranged (“every mountain and island was moved out of its place”). But is the earth *annihilated* here? It seems, from talk of a “receding” sky that the heavens are surely shattered. But the earth seems to be ready for a *renewing*, rather than a *replacing*. There are still judgments to be rendered here, dead to be buried. One can read in Ezekiel 39 the fascinating account of how the first months of the Millennium will be spent in burying dead bodies! See also Amos 9:11-14.

On the other hand, in 20:11, at the end of the 1000 years, it seems there is an abolishing of this old planet altogether, “no place found” for it, and within a few verses there is a new one. It could be that John sees the final ending here and is not given the revelation of the kingdom in between Jesus’ coming and the dissolving, until later.

We will examine this problem of sequence more as we come to the relevant chapters.

**No place to hide (6:15-17).** It would seem, that while men continue to seek a hiding place from Christ, He is engaged in ripping apart every such refuge. Note the use of the word “wrath” in 16 and 17. We discussed earlier that it is not meant for God’s children to be subjected to wrath. Whether bowl judgments targeted at the Devil’s crowd, or the ultimate wrath here, after we have been caught up, we believers shall never be the objects of the wrath of God. But unfortunately we are often caught in the crossfires of man’s inhumanity to man and Satan’s wrath against everyone.



Recall again, please. This is the very end. Jesus has come. As in 11:18 and 19:15. The final wrath. Now, what else was going on in those days of the six seals? What else does He want us to know? It is here that we must introduce the concept of the *close-up*, the detailed describing of events all happening within the framework of seals and trumpets and bowls.

**b. Close-up:**

### **The Jewish elect in the wilderness (7:1-8, 14:1-5, 12:6, 12:13-16)**

I'll say it again: We have already covered most of the entire scope of the Book of Revelation, that is, the Scroll in the hand of the Lamb, in one short chapter. By chapter 7, we have come to the end of human history this side of the second coming. We will not advance beyond this moment until chapter 19. That means that everything that follows from chapters 7 through 18 is nothing more than a review and close-ups of what we have already seen. In chapters 7-18 we will learn the time frame of the seven seals, the political background, the state of the people of God (both Jewish and Christian) during this time, the origin of the trouble, God's preliminary judgments on it all, and more. But it is important to keep the understanding before us that with these six seals we have seen an outline of *most* of the Book.

Where do we go from here? Though chapter 7 begins, "after these things", we need to understand, as with all such phrases in the book, that we are talking about the *sequence of visions* John saw, and not the *sequence of history* that took place. After the whirlwind tour of the Tribulation, John is now given a close-up, a piece of background, so that the setting of the Book starts coming into sharper focus.

**The announcement (7:1-4).** It is worth noting that there are four angels responsible for the preservation of earth. *Four*. And four corners and four winds. Could this "four-ness" correspond to the devastation of the *four horsemen* of chapter 6?

**Timing of the sealing (7:3).** We know that there is incredible harm done to the earth, sea, and trees in chapter 6, so it is clear that the sealing takes place *before the worst of the Great Tribulation* or even at its very beginning. To be specific, the coming trumpets, which take place during the latter seals, sound forth their judgments first on these very things mentioned here: earth, trees, and sea (8:7-9)! So the Israelites must be sealed before this.

**What is the sealing (7:3)?** Ezekiel 9:4-6 talks of a mark placed on the foreheads of those who were truly caring Israelites, those who hated evil and were willing to intercede for their nation. The sealed ones were spared when God unleashed His anger on wicked Israelites. Here is a picture of remnant Israel. There is a remnant today.

Jesus Himself was "sealed", or authorized, made publicly approved, by the Father. Through the words of the Baptist and through God's sovereign power on the mountain of transfiguration, Jesus was sealed, approved, in the presence of His followers (John 6:27).

Following in His train, we too are sealed by means of that same Spirit of God. We are set apart, with God's special mark on our spirit from the day that Jesus comes into our lives. Paul is the messenger of this teaching: II Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13, 4:30. We assume that the sealing of these Jews is similar to our own. A mark of approval, a mark of protection when Satan

is set free by antichrist to do his work here.

Will it be a physical mark that will miraculously appear? Or will it be the moving of the Spirit of God upon these 144,000 so that the angels who see in the Spirit will be sure that these Jewish saints are protected?

**Who are “the servants of God”** being sealed here (7:14)? Their number is 144,000, as in 12 tribes of Israel times 12,000 per tribe. This is a Jewish thing. This is the final remnant of Israel, drawn to Christ here, soon to be filled with the Spirit. Later, after the Gentiles are brought in, as in the last section of this chapter, these Jews come into their own. “And so, all Israel shall be saved (Romans 11:26).” God begins with the Jew and ends with him. Thank God, Gentiles are allowed in, but they must always remember that they were brought in because Israel failed to see Messiah at first. The kingdom is not to be taken over by Gentile culture and thought, but will remain ever, Jewish. See further on this special group at the beginning of chapter 14.

**The list (7:5-8).** The counting of Jacob’s 12 sons has always been a bit confusing. The original 12, in order of their birth, are:

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph [Ephraim/Manasseh], Benjamin. Very little of this order is preserved in the final listing before us.

Notice that **Judah (7:5)**, from whom came the Messiah, is now first, fulfilling the prophecy about his favored status and praiseworthiness (Genesis 49:8). Firstborn **Reuben (7:5)** is second here. Numbers seven and eight of the originals, **Gad and Asher (7:5-6)**, are now three and four. **Dan** is missing altogether, giving rise to the speculation that antichrist will be Jewish, and from that very tribe. I think it safer to look at the behavior of the tribe of Dan, described in the latter portion of the book of Judges, to discover why Dan might not be in favor now. **Naphtali (7:6)** moves then from six to five. **Manasseh (7:6)** is actually, with **Ephraim**, a *grandson* of Jacob, a son of Joseph. And though Manasseh appears next in this list, Ephraim is replaced by dad **Joseph (7:8)**, who is still in 11th place! (Joseph usually does not appear in a listing of tribes.) Brothers **Simeon and Levi (7:7)** are seven and eight, instead of two and three. Levi’s appearance, like Joseph’s, is unusual, as that tribe was to be a special group of priests spread out over the entire nation. They were therefore not given territory of their own, except certain cities. To see them once more as a “normal” tribe lets us know that the Aaronic priesthood that stems from Levi, is now being replaced once and for all by the priesthood of Melchizedec, a type of Jesus in Genesis 14. **Issachar and Zebulun (7:7-8)** retain their places as the last of Leah’s children. And **Benjamin (7:8)**, born from dying Rachel, is still the final son, like his descendant Saul/Paul, “one born out of due time” (I Corinthians 15:8).

I link this first portion of chapter 7 with events in chapters 12 and 14 where we will discuss these matters again. But, put all of these verses of chapters 7, 12, and 14 together, and here is

the picture I see:

For three- and one-half years (12:6), a “woman” (12:1) is securely hidden by God (12:14) from a Dragon (12:9). She has a Child, whom the Dragon immediately attempts to destroy. She is taken to the wilderness by air (12:14). There, the Enemy makes an all-out attempt to destroy her also (12:15), fails (12:16), and begins persecuting the other children of the woman (12:17). The woman is described much like the images of Joseph’s dream, found in Genesis 37:9. “The sun, the moon, and 12 stars” can only be the family known as Israel, in its end-time form. Only Israel combines the activities said to be performed by the woman: she gives birth to the Messiah, gives birth to Messiah’s followers and the remnant, and hides awhile from the wrath of Satan.

Consider the promise of God through Hosea in this regard (2:14): “I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her.” Also, Zechariah: (12:10) “I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for him as one mourns for his only son...”

This is why I suggest that this final “elect” of Israel, hidden away and spoken to by none other than Jesus Himself, are the 144,000. It seems that 7:1-8 is just another way of telling this wilderness story. We read here of the sealing of 144,000 special Jews. This happens early in the Tribulation before the harm caused by the destroying angels (7:3). Israel is called into the wilderness and into the “sealing” process in unbelief. This is why they cannot be a part of the great ingathering of the *second* half of chapter 7: They are not His yet! They are not ready to die the martyr’s death yet. They do not have a song of salvation, yet. But they emerge from the wilderness (14:1-5) truly converted to Jesus.

Does not Paul help us here by saying that “even at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace”? And “...hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (Romans 11:5, 25).” And in the second half of chapter 7, we see those Gentiles indeed being brought in!

**c. Close-up:**

**The persecuted saints (7:9-17, 12:9-11, Daniel 7:25, 8:24)**

**The scene changes dramatically in** the last half of chapter 7 (**7:9-12**). The 144,000 Jews are sealed on earth, before the main events of the Tribulation. But this latter scene is Heavenly, and it is far more than Jews who are being blessed now, although saved Jews may be in their number. All nations are before the Lamb. John is quizzed as to their identity (**7:13**). When the apostle hesitates, the elder who asks him, also answers him (**7:14**): All of the multitude John sees, he is told, have come from the Great Tribulation!

Is this scene taking place at the coming of Jesus? The way John describes the crowd in 7:9 seems to point that way, though the Heavenly circumstances do not, necessarily. That is, it is difficult to say whether the Throne before which they stand (**7:15**) is still in Heaven or has come to earth (22:3). And are they there by martyrdom? Well, we know that most of the assembled surely are. As their companions from the fifth seal (6:11), their robes are white. Their presence before the Throne is permanent and secure (**7:15-16**). The Lamb is to be their eternal Shepherd (**7:17**). The promise had been made at the fifth seal that more slaughtered saints were on the way. They were to wait “a little while.” Here, after the fifth and presumably some of the sixth seal are being acted out, they arrive, and the prophecy is fulfilled. It would seem then that at least we are *near* the end of all things here.

Whether you believe this to be the church or a group of saints living during the Tribulation, notice that the way they get to Heaven is by slaughter. And notice that they are there by the blood of Jesus. Whether Abraham or David or Paul or Billy Graham or you or me or saints present or saints to come, the only way into Heaven is by the blood of the Lamb.

They come from every nation on earth, as the description of the redeemed in verse 9.

**7:11-12.** Notice how they trigger another praise service when the elders and living creatures hear what is happening.

**7:14-17.** And see how tenderly they are described and comforted by “one of the elders.” A bit of their future is incorporated here also. They will be serving God in God’s temple. The one on the Throne will actually be living among them. We know that in the new heavens and new earth there is no temple, so this is a prediction of the Millennial reign. Precious promises are laid on the people of God here.

**Is chapter 14 a key to chapter 7?** We will discuss it more when we get there but consider for now that chapter 14 also begins with talk of the 144,000, who in that chapter are securely with Jesus around His Throne! Then there is mention of a Gospel that will be preached to all nations, just like the “all nations” assembled here in chapter 7. But in chapter 14, there is no question as to the timing. In rapid-fire succession we see the Gospel preached, Babylon down, Jesus descending, the earth harvested. All we know for sure is that the end of chapter 7, at least in part, is somewhere towards the end of the Tribulation, very near the final return of Christ.

The picture of **persecuted believers (7:14)**, is a background shot of situations that prevail over the entire Tribulation period. Daniel saw it clearly even in his day, a king that would arise and destroy the holy people (Daniel 8:24). Let’s piece together the other parts of the puzzle and see what we come up with.

Following a brief episode of Heavenly conflict, Satan and all of his own are deposited here on the planet (12:9). One speaking from Heaven tells how believers overcame Satan by Jesus’ blood and their testimony (12:11). The Jews, 144,000 of them, are in hiding, as Christ reveals Himself to them. So the other saints of God take the brunt of Satan’s hits, being faithful even to death. We will see later the exact manifestation Satan chooses to use for the end-time masquerade. But the players are obvious. First, Demons. Then, saints, that is, called “those who keep God’s commandments and have the testimony of Jesus”, the “other” children of the woman Israel. It is important to recall that the first Church was Jewish, that the Gospel was first preached to the Jews, and that when all is said and done, the tree to which we Gentiles have been grafted is Israel.

In summary then, Chapter 7 portrays two background pictures, two separate groups of people. The first is a selected group of end-time Israelites, who by their calling here to salvation and protection will fulfill the ultimate purposes of the Lord for the Jewish people. God heals their backsliding, and loves them freely, as He promised He would do (Hosea 14:4). The second group is clearly Gentile, although already-saved Jews cannot be ruled out as one of the “nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues” gathered in on that day. This is an international group of saints of the living God that has in the last days overcome the onslaught of Satan and has arrived at the very presence of God, never to leave Him again.

Having shown us where the story is going, the Spirit now takes us *back* into the dark days

of the Tribulation, to focus in on the climactic disasters of *the latter seals*. We call this next series of events the “seven trumpets.”

#### **d. The First Six Trumpets and the three woes**

**aka: the seventh seal (8, 9, 11:15-19)**

**A break (8:1-6).** All seven trumpets are part of the seven seals. In fact it appears as though they can all be found in the fifth and sixth seals. The catastrophes of the first four seals are now seemingly intensified, as the fraction moves from one-fourth to one-third. Now read carefully. The one-fourth has to do with human population under the control of antichrist. “The earth” is specified. The one-third we see now, describes vegetation, sea-life, water in general, the atmosphere, and soon, “mankind.” People. Wholesale carnage.

**8:1** is a **period of silence**, a break in the action. Perhaps we are being led to understand that the chronology of the Book has been disrupted. The trumpets do not follow the seals, and especially that sublime beauty around the Throne, just described in chapter 7. They are rather included inside of them. We are zeroing in on the climactic final weeks and months of the Tribulation. This is a close-up view of that World War that was introduced when the first six seals were loosed.

And what does “about half an hour” mean? My wildest guess: “about half an hour.” Think of it. John is overwhelmed with seeing the planet at war, two billion people controlled by means of a world ruler. Perhaps weapons and bombs, then famine and animals. He’s seen God’s saints

slaughtered and Jews sealed and the coming again of Jesus with its accompanying wrath. Time for a break here. About a half an hour to recover, please.

**(8:2)** John identifies these trumpet-sounding angels as *the* seven angels that stand before God. Could this be a connection to the “seven Spirits of God” of 3:1 and 1:4? Seven spirits are before His Throne, 1:4, 4:5, sent into all the earth. In chapter 15 and 16 we are introduced once more to “the seven angels” who will pour out the seven bowls of judgment. Are they the same?

Not just every angel goes around sounding a trumpet. These messengers are authoritative and were mentioned by Paul. When he speaks of the *last trump*, he is quite possibly speaking of the same seventh trumpet which John heard.

**The Golden Altar (8:3-5).** Moses was told to make all things according to the pattern shown him on the Mount (Exodus 25:40). Part of that pattern was a golden altar of incense (Exodus 30:1-3), a copy, a shadow, of the Heavenly (Hebrews 5:8). The incense that was to be forever offered from that Heavenly altar, we now understand, is the sweet communion of the saints with their God. How He cherishes our prayers!

Incense is said to be the prayers of the saints in 5:8, here it is the accompanying fragrance. In 5:8 it seems as though saints gone on before us are bringing our prayers to God. Here the means of conveyance is purely angelic. I think it not wise to build a doctrine of *intercession* around either of these two passages, or both of them combined, when no such doctrine has been built by apostles before this time. Our prayers are given to God. How they get to Him is only hinted at here. Suffice it to say that He Himself hears and answers our prayers and enjoys hearing from us. The mystery of the method will be shown to us, perhaps, on that Day.

**(8:5-6)** And can it be that the prayers *of* (not *to*) the saints on earth, praying in the Spirit according to the will of God, bring about all these events? The prayers and incense ascend, and the response is fire from the altar! An awesome combination of noises and sights and sounds and actions are seen, and the trumpets of judgment begin to sound. Look at it. God has a plan. God's people on earth are in agreement with the plan. Their prayers are added to His Will, and things begin to happen!

The sounding of the trumpets follows the same pattern as the opening of the seals. That is, the first four are different from the last three.

In the first four trumpet soundings, a significant fraction of life on earth (now one-third) is devastated. Trees, the sea, the creatures in the sea, ships on the sea, the rivers, light from sun and moon...all are hit, and hit hard. The difference, as indicated, is that the seals seem to unfold the history of man's hostility to himself, especially the greed of would-be world powers, while these soundings herald catastrophes of nature set in motion by the Creator, things outside the



power of man. All of it is happening at generally the same time, but we do not see the Lord's direct influence when we first open the seals. Now God shows us that He is using the hardened hearts of men to bring about His own judgments on fallen man.

**Trumpet one (8:7).** Hail, as in the seventh plague of Moses (Exodus 9:13 ff), is mentioned here first in the Revelation, but will revisit earth at the end of the trumpets and bowls, in a mightier way.

**Hail and fire together** show just how Divine is this natural happening. God promised Ezekiel that the northern army of Gog (Ezekiel 38:22) would be judged in this way. There the fire is laced with brimstone. And yes, Moses witnessed a mixture like this in his day (Exodus 9:24).

John adds that *blood*, a fearsome plague in and of itself, will also be a part of that apocalyptic storm. Is this the blood of the storm victims? One-third of all earth's trees will be destroyed in this way. It seems that all of earth's grass is being destroyed here too, but perhaps the text means that all the grass *where the trees are being burned up* is meant.

A more pressing question than grass is, *which* third of the world is intended here, and which fourth of the world in the seals? Is this a sprinkling of people world-wide that will equal one-third or one-fourth when totaled? Or is there a particular portion of earth being removed all at once?

Some Bible-knowing Westerners assume that all of earth's trouble will continue to center around Europe and the Middle East. They reason that America is not clearly mentioned in end-time prophecy, and that that means this righteous part of the world will be exempt. Others see the Bible's silence about things Western as proof that by the time the final scenes of earth unfold, the *unrighteous* West will be no more, victim of an all-out attack by a powerful United States of Europe, or Islamic terrorists.

Even the man of sin in Daniel does not look to the West as threatening: It is "news from the East and the North" that trouble him in his final push for power (Daniel 11:44). Could it be that America's cup of iniquity is fuller than we have realized? Will we be gone on that day?

**Trumpet two (8:8-9).** More blood plagues the earth, this time caused by what is called a great mountain. Is this a picture of the fall of Babylon, prophesied with similar language in Jeremiah 51:25? "...O destroying mountain... I will stretch out My hand against you, roll you down from the rocks, and make you a burnt mountain..." Strange prophecy, when one realizes that *old* Babylon was on a *plain*. On the other hand, does such an interpretation explain why one third of all living creatures in the sea die, and one third of the ships are destroyed? What monumental amount of real estate would have to plunge into our oceans to cause such nightmarish destruction?

Can Rome's position, with its small hills, be made to fit this prophecy? Or is this figurative language, "mountain" simply meaning an exalted Empire whose day of wrath has come?

Macarthur's comments: *Probably a huge meteor or asteroid surrounded by gases that will ignite as it enters earth's atmosphere. Its impact will create a tidal wave, destroying one-third of the world's ships. As to blood, he suggests, this may refer to an event known as red tides, caused by billions of dead micro-organisms poisoning the water – in this case the result of the meteor's collision...*

Following up on this one possibility, and there are perhaps others, meteors are "space rocks" that hit our atmosphere so fast that they burn up, but many do not burn out, and they fall to earth as meteorites. Same rock. What is the possibility that one could hit earth? 17,000 meteorites land here every year. Some have left huge craters...

*Meteorites crash through the earth's atmosphere with tremendous force. The largest meteorites leave enormous holes in the ground called impact craters. The best-preserved impact crater in the world is the Barringer Meteorite Crater, near Winslow, Arizona.*

Since we are a 70% water planet, most meteors land in the water. Which fits the Revelation description well. It doesn't say *a mountain* was thrown into the sea, but *something like a great mountain... burning with fire.*

Totally within the realm of possibility! Poison kills the animals. Tidal waves wreck the ships. These details were left out in the seals but were happening all along...

**Trumpet three (8:10-11).** Of special significance during this time is this third trumpet and a star called *wormwood*, or "bitter". The word in the Greek is the same one used to describe a dark green plant used in some liqueurs to this day. In a general sense though it means anything bitter or grievous.

The phenomenon of **falling** stars in the Bible is generally believed to be what we refer to as falling stars today: meteors. Asteroids also fall towards and even on top of, planet Earth. Asteroids are huge rock-like entities that actually circle the sun, like we do. A piece of them is a meteor/meteorite.

From The *Chicago Sun-Times* Friday, October 4, 2002, this article by Paul Recer:

*WASHINGTON— Asteroids regularly explode over the earth with the intensity of a nuclear bomb and there is a chance the explosions could be mistaken for a nuclear attack, possibly triggering an atomic war, an Air Force general said Thursday. At least 30 times a year, a space rock measuring a few yards across slashes into the atmosphere and explodes, releasing energy equal to that of an atomic bomb, Air Force*

*Brig. Gen. Simon P. Worden told members of a House Science subcommittee...*

*... Worden said Pakistan and India, both of which have the atomic bomb, were at full alert in August, poised for war. Not far away, a few weeks before, US satellites detected over the Mediterranean an atmospheric flash that indicated "an energy release comparable to the Hiroshima burst." ... it was caused by an asteroid 15 feet to 30 feet wide...*

So, it is not difficult to imagine, is it, a rock of greater proportion, and still radioactive from a long fall from space, dropping into the earth, and contaminating great river basins?

But this would be the same as trumpet two? Maybe this is more likely a comet:

*A comet also orbits the Sun, but unlike an asteroid, it's composed of ice and dust. So, when a comet gets close to the Sun, its ice and dust content start to vaporize. So, when seen in a telescope, a comet appears fuzzy and/or **has a tail**.*

Note: "A great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch..." A torch. A tail.

How dangerous is an orbiting rock or snowball?

*In 1908 an approximately 30-meter-diameter asteroid or comet entered the atmosphere and exploded above ground in Tunguska, Russia. The explosion knocked down approximately 80 million trees over an area of 2,150 square kilometers (830 square miles).*

Can God, who created the heavens and the earth, direct a snowball to earth when He wants to?

**Trumpet four (8:12).** The simplest explanation of the darkening of heavenly bodies seems to be an eclipse. Yet, the language of the text is that of judgment, and unusual behavior of these orbs. Perhaps it will help to understand that these four trumpets ought to be viewed as one catastrophic event with four parts, even as the first four seals seemed to describe one campaign with four effects. Imagine, then, a continent-wide hailstorm, together with a great meteor falling into the ocean and a comet crashing into the ground all in the same time period. Then, I think, an eclipse takes on some rather huge proportions in the mind of men. One would think they would get the message!

In our day, even a sky filled with smoke engenders fear.

You begin to see now why this time period is called the Great Tribulation! One worldwide catastrophe after another. All within just a few years!

**Announcement of the final three trumpets, aka three woes (8:13).** Verse 13 is better grouped with the chapter 9 verses, for it has nothing to do with the fourth trumpet. Here is a shifting of scene once more. Just as the final three *seals* describe an intensity beyond the first four, so these last trumpets, which, you recall, take place during the latter seals, are to be especially dire. Alas! Woe! The Spirit expresses great grief coming to the planet. The first woe, or fifth trumpet (9:1-12), is a demonic military operation. The second woe, 9:13-21, and perhaps 11:1-14, involves 200,000,000 soldiers and the demise of one third of the world's population. The third woe, 11:15-19, follows immediately after the second, and is another description of what we saw during the sixth seal. It is the end of the end.

As to the word "woe", Jesus used it often, especially in regard to the scribes and Pharisees. Paul pronounced a woe upon himself if he preached not the Gospel. A woe is placed on false teachers by Jude. The word is an exclamation of grief. In the case of the Tribulation time, unimaginable grief. Calamity. And denunciation.

## Chapter 9.

**Trumpet 5, the first woe (9:1-12).** More intensity. A twelve-verse description is given to the fifth trumpet, as opposed to one or two to the first four trumpets. Previewing the restraining power of angels (9:1), and the prison in which demons are held (9:2), we see a horde of locusts descend upon the earth (9:2-3). Perhaps as fascinating here, is the first mention in Revelation of a bottomless pit. From two Greek words, *phrear* and *abusson*, the phrase describes not only the grave, but a significant prison-like restraining area of the demon world.

The idea of the *pit* or *Pit*, is not first a New Testament one. As early as Job, men were said to go there (Job 33:8) and God is said to be keeping people *from* going there (Job 33:30). There are at least three Hebrew words that describe this hole, or trap, but in every case, it seems clear that this is the place of departed spirits.

King David seems to differentiate the godly from the others who go to the pit (Psalm 28:1, 143:7, 30:9). And later, with the prophets, the pit has become the future abode of none other than Lucifer and other such evil ones. Isaiah 14:15, which also mentions *Sheol*, the grave, speaks of how Lucifer will be brought to the lowest depths of the pit. Later, in Isaiah 24:21-23, exalted ones on high and kings of the earth are gathered as prisoners in a pit, as though shut up in prison, and all of this in a context of the last days.

Ezekiel is in full agreement here. Ezekiel 26:20 speaks of the wicked city of Tyre, and how it is consigned to the lowest parts of the earth. There, the inhabitants will meet the "people of old." In Ezekiel 28, the "prince" of Tyre is to be thrown down into the pit because of his proud heart. Later in the chapter, the "king" of Tyre is described as one who was in Eden, as the "anointed cherub", cast out of the mountain of God. In 31, Ezekiel sees Egypt delivered to death

in the depths of the earth, among the children of men who go down to the pit. In 32 a whole array of nations joins the Egyptians. All are referred to as “those who go down to the pit.”

So it is not unusual that, in Jesus’ time, as a group of demons (Luke 8:31) were being confronted by the Son of God, they begged that they not have to be sent to *tan abusson*. They truly believed in a gathering place of departed and fallen spirits.

Then there is the classic passage of Paul regarding the restraining of Satan, II Thessalonians 2:7-8. We will talk of it in more depth later but suffice it to say for now that the recent interpretation that calls for a removal of the Holy Spirit from the earth (!) doesn’t quite do justice to the text. Rather, it is *angels* who restrain the beast in this very pit which we see first in the passage before us.

After chapter 9, the pit is mentioned several other times. Most crucially, it is said that the beast arises from this pit. This can only happen after he is released, and thus no longer restrained (11:7, 17:8). That must mean he is in that pit now! Those who theorize that antichrist is alive today are correct, I believe. Alive in the pit, having lived on earth once before. The final reference to the pit is in Revelation 20, where the key, now back in good hands, is used to bind Satan, as the beast was once bound. More when we come to chapter 20.

So that brings us to **9:1**, the **fallen star**. That’s not falling, as in meteor showers. And that’s not really “star” as in heavenly body. Rather, we are back to chapter one, where star seems to mean angel. And here, fallen angel. This particular one is given a name in verse 11. The angel of the bottomless pit is Abaddon, aka Apollyon. In either Hebrew or Greek, his name means “destroyer.” The thief comes to steal, kill, and *destroy* (John 10:10). From the moment he is given authority, i.e., the key to the bottomless pit, he is destroying. The angel that has been guarding this pit for centuries, allowing in and out only what God desires, now turns over the entrance to Satan’s rep, if not Satan himself. I tend toward the former (rep) idea because (1) Satan has names of his own, and needs not to be referred to as Apollyon or Abaddon. (2) Satan is not omni-present; he is *already on the earth* as the beast at this time. Recall that the Book of Revelation is not sequential. The Tribulation is already underway in this chapter, which means antichrist has already risen from this very pit. But now his forces are given even greater authority and destructive power. They certainly must think they are winning this thing! But all is in the perfect plan of God, the one who sees even the sparrow fall!

Here we get a glimpse of the very gates of Hell spoken of by Jesus, and we see why he said that the saints will not be overcome by those gates. As they are swung open (**9:2**) and smoke and monstrous destructive powers (**9:3**) fill the earth, the target of the wrath of God, “those men who do not have the seal of God” are *all* that are harmed (**9:4**). This descriptor ties in to chapter 7’s sealing of the Jews, and even sounds like the wording of 7:3. These repetitions keep reminding

us that seals and trumpets and bowls are all happening in the same time frame.

Where are the “saints” at this time? Not mentioned. Have most of them been wiped out by now? Daniel 12:12 seems to say there are only a few who will survive the entire Tribulation.

When we see the sun and air darkened, we’re brought back immediately to trumpet 4, where the same thing happens. Here we are given a reason for the darkening, but we are not told where the smoke comes from. Again, we can think of things happening in our own day when we see passages such as these. Lots of wars mean lots of fires. Lots of fires mean lots of smoke. The war rages on and the earth gets darker and darker.

**(9:5-6)** They can harm unmarked men only, but cannot kill them. Those not appointed to wrath are safe. The symptoms of the sickness they generate last up to five months. Three times it is said that their sting is like a scorpion’s. The scorpion’s sting produces bee-like reactions and worse, but seldom is lethal to humans. And the effect of this weapon is so great that men will *want* to die, but they will not be permitted to do so. Here is a poison that will incapacitate a human for up to five months!

**(9:7-10):** I use the term “weapon” for that seems to be what is being pictured, a military device with the shape of a horse (legs = wheels?), crowns on their head (propellers?), faces like a man’s face (like the grille on an automobile?), hair like a woman’s hair (actual hair visible through clear windshields?), iron breastplates (vehicular metal?), the deafening sound (as in powerful engines?), “tails” that sting (guns protruding?).

And a Hellish creature controls the entire operation (9:1)

**(9:11).** One can only wonder how much demonic activity is behind *all* such military might. What is called the “god of fortresses” in Daniel 11:38 is certainly worshiped in our day, and behind every god is a demon (I Corinthians 10:20).

It will be fascinating for you to stop here and read the book of Joel. Read of the locusts there and the threats of the Day of the Lord. You can also ask yourself why a certain song about Joel 2 is sung today with smiles, and compared somehow to a modern-day Christian army that will overcome all.

No. Joel and John see a time of horror coming to the planet. Christians will be nearly annihilated from the earth.

I offer the following as a possibility of the sort of thing John might have seen:

*The Locust Assault Helicopter is the PLA transport and support helicopter and the cheapest armed helicopter in the game with the shop price of \$40k. It uses a coaxial*

*rotor system, negating the need for a tail rotor. The Locust is the PLA workhorse, doing tasks such as close air support, troop transport, crate transport and HVT pickups...the Locust is highly versatile with its high lift capacity and medium/heavy armament.*

*The quadruple .50 caliber guns on the helicopter make it very effective against armor. The dual .50cal gun pods contain a total incredible amount of 1200 rounds in each (a total of 2400 rounds in reserves), making it very unlikely to run out of ammunition on the guns.*

*The Locust is best used against infantry and light armor. It can destroy heavier armor, but the risks of getting hit increase and the rocket ammunition will be used up quickly.*

*The helicopter's survivability is quite good against SAMs and AA fire but it has a poor ability to dodge effectively. The cockpit will protect the pilot from small arms, .50cal rounds and minigun bullets, so the crew is safe from harm as long as they are inside.*

*It is often used to destroy stationary targets such as buildings...*

**Trumpet 6, woe two (9:13-21 and 11:1-14).** Going from bad to worse, four angels stationed at the Euphrates River are now released to kill one-third of humanity **(9:13-15)**. The army summoned to accomplish this is mentioned here **(9:16)** and in the sixth bowl, 16:12. Putting all the information together we note that the army is 200,000,000 strong and is from the East.

A *Time* magazine article of the 60's mentioned even then the possibility of such a marching force *from China alone*. The official standing army of that nation today, even with para-military included is only around four million. It is the first in size of the nations of earth. But even if one could combine it with Russia's one million, North Korea's huge force, and all the official armies of the present East, the number would be far less than 200 million.

Looks like we are talking here about either great civilian hordes that could be mobilized, or of mechanization, perhaps robotic in nature, that these horsemen seem to depict. There seems to be little question that the horses are mechanical. It could be that since both the horses and the horsemen are described in details that makes little sense to us now **(9:17-19)**, these are a remote-control army of tanks run by super robots. Artificial Intelligence run amok.

We see also a need for a dried-up Euphrates **(9:14, 16:12)** so that this army can arrive at Armageddon. As stated, the picture of horsemen here **(9:16-19)** can only refer to machines of war. The horses' heads are like lions belching fire and smoke. We've seen fire and smoke before, many times over. But we have not had brought to our attention in the western world, a Euphrates connection. Let's consider the river called in the Bible "The Great River," that we know as Euphrates, that which "gushes forth."

The discussion starts in Genesis 2:14, where it is listed as one of the four branches of the original river in Eden. It actually watered the Garden inside of that wonderful land, then split four ways. We next encounter the Euphrates when it is called the boundary of the covenant people. It is a little known fact, but God's people are to inherit a piece of land from the Nile to the

Euphrates, according to Genesis 15:18, Deuteronomy 1:7, 11:24, and Joshua 1:4. A promise repeated to Abraham, Moses, and Joshua ought to be taken seriously! A partial fulfillment of this promise is found in II Samuel 8:3. David here defeats the king of Zobah, in Syria, whose territory stretched indeed to the Great River.

Now how could such a great waterway be *dried up*? Of course, God can do it Himself, and has done such miracles before. But it looks as though man may have it on his own agenda, playing into the will of God in his continued ignorance of the Master Plan of Heaven. I quote from ICE Case Studies, the “Tigris-Euphrates River Dispute”, undated but written around the mid-1990’s:

*The Southeastern Anatolia Development Project is one of the most ambitious development projects in the world. It plans to utilize the waters of the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers with the construction of 22 dams and 19 Hydroelectric Power Plants ...also plans to divert the waters of the basin [for irrigation purposes]. The Turkish government wants to utilize the waters of the basin... [this] creates a great deal of resentment from Syria and Iraq [all three countries share the River] The tensions over the waters of the basin have reached internationally acknowledged levels... This situation threatens the delicate political stability in the Middle east... the basin is one of the most unstable political areas in the region....in the Middle East, the water scarcity is so severe that nations are threatening each other with war. In 88 developing countries, with nearly 40 per cent of the world’s population, water shortages are already a serious constraint on their development... almost all of the nations in the Middle East suffer from serious water scarcity.*

*The Euphrates-Tigris basin is one of the most important waterways in the world and plays an extremely important role in the future of water availability in the Middle East...*

*The Turkish President [from 1993-2000] Suleyman Demirel’s words on this issue are a good indication of the frustration felt by the Turkish people: “Neither Syria or Iraq can lay claim to Turkey’s rivers any more than Ankara [Turkey] could claim their oil. This is a matter of sovereignty. We have a right to do anything we like. The water resources are Turkey’s, the oil resources are theirs...” An armed conflict between the two countries over the water issues remains within the range of future possibilities.*

*...The hostilities between [Syria and Turkey] reached a peak during Syria’s filling of Lake Assad, which reduced the flow of the river to a trickle [1970’s]. According to those who watch this scene, Turkey has the ability to shut down and completely stop the flow of the Euphrates River.*

Let’s look at some of the other details given here.



**(9:13)** The source of all operations is still the golden altar, where prayers continue to ascend to God and mesh with His will.

**(9:14)** Angels do not just float around the sky looking for something to do. They are on assignment. Here are four who are told to keep the river flowing until a certain moment, specified in the next verse.

**(9:15)** At exactly the prearranged time, they begin to shut down the river, using human agents, so that the final scenes can be enacted. The picture is detailed more in chapter 16. Though Armageddon is not mentioned until then, it is in view here. One-third of the human race still left is now to be eliminated!

**(9:16)** Whether men or machines, the number 200, 000,000 is not figurative.

**(9:17-19)** Breastplates, as perhaps in the helicopters above, are once again metal, but many-colored. Explosives seem to be coming from the top of the machine, and the rear. As with locusts, there are probably many ways one can go in searching for the future possibilities, but artificial intelligence is one way:

*Slaughterbots, also called 'lethal autonomous weapons systems' or 'killer robots', are weapons that use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to identify, select, and kill human targets without human intervention. Though these weapons sound futuristic, reports of their use are starting to mount up. The Future of Life Institute considers slaughterbots to be both immoral and a major threat to global security.*

*The FLI policy team encourages the formation of new international law on autonomous weapons. Alongside a majority of the world's states, FLI argues that some autonomous weapons must be banned - specifically, those which target humans, which are highly unpredictable, or which function beyond meaningful human control. FLI, alongside the Red Cross, calls for other autonomous weapons - those that can be meaningfully controlled by humans - to be regulated.*

For those who need help in speculating what is coming to the planet that looks like Revelations monsters, AI is the place to look. "Slaughter" is surely the word for it all. One-third of mankind will be erased by the emanations from these weapons.

In chapter 16, this same Euphrates uprising is said to be spearheaded by the kings of the East. China. North Korea. Will Japan and other East Asian entities have joined the amalgamation by then? A formidable array will be headed Westward to confront antichrist, or so it seems.

Tidings out of the East and the North (Russia) will trouble [the antichrist], we are informed by Daniel's angel. More in chapter 16.

**And the other two-thirds? (9:20-21)** Amazing! The world will see all this happen, and even the mobilization of huge armies going to war, but according to the text **(9:21)**, they still will not turn to God. Immorality will continue to rule the day. We who have lived through the nightmare of September 11 (2001) know exactly what that is about. A nod to God, a moment of silence, a shaking, but soon, back to life as usual.

Notice the sins of this final generation. The works of their hands, namely idols. Again I want to be as literal as possible. I know that movie stars and sports heroes and good jobs etc. can be idols, but what if indeed the text is talking about idols as we know them, made out of the substances mentioned? As civilized man is wiped off the face of the earth, will the more primitive types emerge? And cling to their false religions until they too are judged? And the text talks of sorceries – connected to drugs – and sexual immorality, and thefts, which we can easily imagine will be on the increase as the economy tanks.

But really, does pagan idolatry exist today? Oh my! Exist? It is on the rise! From *"Tomorrow's World"* website:

*The twenty-first century has witnessed remarkable historic events—the rise of Russia after the demise of the USSR, the resurgence of militant Islam, the rise of China, the fragmenting of the European Union, and ever-deepening divisions in the United States. However, one of the most surprising events has been the reemergence of ancient pagan ideas and traditions in Western nations once considered "Christian."*

*As part of this global trend, Iceland has constructed its first temple in over 1,000 years to worship the old Nordic gods Thor and Odin. In England, thousands gather at Stonehenge on the summer solstice to greet the rising sun—as ancient pagans once did. In Edinburgh, Scotland, performers painted as red devils entertain crowds to celebrate the ancient Celtic Fire Festivals of Beltane and Samhain, while many gather at ancient U.K. sites to burn a wicker man—as Druids once did. In America, thousands travel to Burning Man festivals catering to uninhibited behavior resembling old pagan practices.*

*In Greece, Hellenists are promoting the worship of the ancient deities Zeus, Apollo, and Athena, while at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, children write prayers to Aphrodite or Venus, the Greco-Roman goddess of love and lust—and patron goddess of prostitutes. In Eastern Europe, people celebrate ancient fertility rites by dancing around and jumping over fires, customs from a pre-Christian past. In Russia, church leaders note with concern the growing interest in pagan traditions. In America, the fastest-growing religion is witchcraft, and statues promoting satanism appear on public grounds. The U.S. Air Force Academy has even constructed a pagan chapel.*

India has millions of gods. There are still tribes in Africa and South America that worship gods we have never heard of. Paganism is back, and according to revelation 9:20, will be here until the end.

**e. A word for John, Chapter 10**

**Break.** Chapter 10 serves, among other things, as an introduction to the *last trumpet*, just as 8:1-5 built up to the *last seal*. There are observable patterns in the book once you get used to the flow. It seems to be time now for another break. John has a better picture of things, but his head must be swimming. Nature and God and man all on collision courses. The world surely ending, not as people predict now, with a huge revival, but with what Paul had said, “evil seducers will become worse and worse.”

**A Mighty Angel (10:1)** There is a little more background in chapter 10, mostly John's own personal matters. First another angel is introduced to the readers **(10:1)**. No name is given, as with most of the angels, though he is considered "mighty." I believe it is proper to assume that angels, however mighty, are mostly nameless for us lest we fall into the trap of honoring the messengers above the Message and the One Who gave the Message, Jesus.

This angel brings the Throne's identification with him, a multicolored rainbow. Face like the sun, feet like pillars of fire. We read past these words so quickly! But with what splendor does God clothe His ministering spirits. This is one of the most beautiful of all.

Try to remember now, all of this is happening within the framework of seven seals, and within those seven seals, seven trumpets of magnification. More and more details are being added. And now a detail for John, before the story moves on.

**A little book (10:2)** It is open, ready to be used. See its identity below under 10:8-11.

This particular messenger, with the way he is dressed, and the appearance of his face, and the lion-like sound of his voice **(10:3)**, sorely tempts us to say, "Jesus!" But even John, who has a problem with identity from time to time, does not believe this angel is Deity. It would seem though that he is a favored creation of God, for the rainbow-like aura around his head echoes the very appearance of the Throne of God (4:3)! How many marvelous messengers there must be and how thrilling the prospect of fellowship with them one day!

**The seven thunders (10:3-4)** So he cries out. Just after the angel "roars" there is a mysterious sound in the heavens, censored for all time. John may have recalled a similar experience in his own life with the Master, one he told us about in John 12:27-31. There the voice was clear in the ears of Jesus, attuned to the Father's every Word. The crowd heard only thunder. In the passage before us, John hears clearly what was said, though the sound was a thundering.

There is a precedent for a thundering God in Job's words (Job 37:4-5). "...He thunders with His majestic voice...God thunders marvelously with His voice..." Already in Revelation (4:5) we have seen thunderings proceeding from the Throne. Since we may be talking here about the voice of God, perhaps there is a tie-in between seven thunders and the seven Spirits of God we have seen several times. If those Spirits are Divine, or even if they are angelic, they surely speak what God wants spoken. And John is told that the message here is for John only, as indeed most of this chapter seems to be.

Although we may not know until glory what the seven thunders said, there is a message that follows this thundering, of great importance, in my estimation. In fact, we recall a similar scene in the book of Daniel! Daniel 12:5-7 records a conversation between Daniel and some Heavenly beings. They are discussing the *time* of Daniel's prophecy. Incredibly the angels report

to us the same time period as will soon be discussed throughout Revelation: “a time, times, and half a time.” This phrase is widely seen to be three- and one-half years, as in one year + two years + one-half year. The striking thing about Daniel’s account is that there is a “man” there holding up hands to Heaven and *swearing* by God that this is true. So here in **10:5-6** a hand is raised, and a monumental promise is sealed with a similar oath. Read Daniel 12:5-7.

The KJV has the angel saying that “time shall be no more.” **(10:6)** I like that translation but nearly every other translation of the Bible has changed the English word to “delay.” The other translators are trying to tell us that John is not being told that there will be no such thing as time any more, but only eternity. That day is coming. But we have a thousand years after the Tribulation of time. No, what is being said is that *time is up for the planet as we know it*. No more delay. No more waiting. We are about at the end. The next verse confirms this idea.

The statement is made to John **(10:7)** that when the seventh or last trumpet sounds, the mystery of God is *finished*. Within that final trumpet (11:15-19) we see the coming again of Christ. That fits perfectly with statements by Jesus and Paul regarding the sounding of a trumpet (yes, the *last* trumpet) in the end of all things. Please compare:

Jesus (Matthew 24:31): [immediately *after* the tribulation] “...He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds.” This event is known by the modern term *rapture*.

**Paul** (I Thessalonians 4:16): “The Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, and the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God... we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” This event is also known as a rapture. It is the same event!

Again **Paul** (I Corinthians 15:51-52): “We...shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised.” Sounds again like the identical happening!

Let’s add in John again (Revelation 10:7, 11:15): “In the days of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God [will] be finished.... Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in Heaven...” I wonder if those voices are our own, announcing the kingdom coming to earth. What a *glorious* day!

**The Little Book (10:8-11)** There is a large set of scrolls in the hand of the One on the Throne (5:1). Included in that larger Book, the purposes of God for His people, is this small scroll, the purposes of God for John. I think it not too far-fetched to say that there is a little book for all of God’s true members. A personal scroll. An outline of the word I am to speak, and to whom. A true delight to receive, for it is mine, my reason to be. What a sweet meal to receive from the

Lord. But of course, digesting the book is something else. Can it be that every child of God, to be ultimately successful, must experience some bitter results from the Sweet Word here on earth?

Eating of a sweet book with troubling aftertaste takes us back to brother Ezekiel who was also told to eat a sweet scroll (Ezekiel 2:8-3:3). Ezekiel is told by this symbolism that he will be preaching whatever word the Lord gives him (Ezekiel 3:4-6). The bad news is that Israel will not hear (Ezekiel 3:7-9). We are told later in that same chapter 3 that the Spirit lifted Ezekiel up, took him away, and he went in "bitterness of spirit" even though the Word had been sweet to him just moments before! One cannot help but draw the conclusion that our brother John is being told the same thing: To hear and understand and believe God's Word is sweet but produces difficult events when preached to others.

"How sweet," says brother David (Psalm 119:103) "are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth." But share it with others, even family members sometimes, and see the result. Those who even share your love of Christ and His Word can become an enemy if your sweetness of taste does not match theirs.

The Prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 15:16) speaks of finding and eating the words of God, words which became the joy and rejoicing of his heart. But Jeremiah's sufferings included threats on his life, destruction of his personal scroll of the Word of God, imprisonment, placement in a miry dungeon, exile in Egypt. He lived a life of depression and weeping for the sinful nation of Israel, prefiguring, with his constant mourning, the Son of God, who would likewise weep over Jerusalem.

John then is not the first and neither will he be the last, to have God's Words sweeten His tongue and then turn to bitter experiences in his life. We have only tradition upon which to rely about the very end of John's life. The stories are so varied as not to be worthy of repeating here. Needless to say, his life was not a pleasant one after having received such an extensive revelation from God.

May all of this be a reminder to those who crave to know God's Word above all else. Add to all of the above, Paul's "thorn" after his own revelation of the majesty of Heaven, and we are left pondering Jesus' message about counting the cost. Yes, John, you will have a great ministry delivering these words to the church. But the price for such a privilege will be high .

Of course, John has already paid a huge price for the life He is living here in Heaven. So there is more coming? Now I present to you a speculation. It is only mine, but consider it, to see if there is merit.

Do you remember the outing that Jesus had with some of His disciples after His resurrection? Jesus says some very serious things to Peter about his future. Immediately Peter

wants to know, what about John? Jesus' answer was a bit strange to our ears, but of course quite appropriate. He said, if I would want John to stay on the earth until I come back, is that your concern? Just follow me.

We have taken that to mean that we should not worry about other people's futures, but just be faithful to our own calling. What if there was more to it?

All the other apostles are dead at the time of this writing. Maybe 20 or 30 years have passed, and John lives on. He is tortured by the Roman government, and now banished to a rocky island. But he lives. Then he is called up to Heaven. We all see this in the book. But we don't see him return to earth. Now, it is appointed unto men once to die. Did John ever come back and die?

Look at the end of this chapter again. A prophecy is made about John. Should we take it that he was released from the island, and started a ministry of prophecy in the world of his day, and then died?

Or is it possible, since the very next chapter tells the story of the two witnesses, that he is one of them? Does not the text of 11:3 state that these two witnesses will *prophesy* for three and one-half years? Could it be that God will take the prophet of the Old Testament, and this Prophet of the New Testament and put them together in a final prophetic demonstration before John actually dies? Yes, I just called John a prophet, because God tells him he is to prophesy!

Be that as it may, let's go on to chapter 11 where the story of the two witnesses/prophets is told.

**f. Close-up:**

**Jerusalem -the temple and sacrifices (11:1-2a)**

Chapter 11 opens with scenes that seem to take place during this sixth-trumpet period, but which also give us a sense of what is happening during the *entire* Tribulation.

Much like a man in Ezekiel 40:3, John is told to measure the temple. Understand that he is measuring a temple *during the tribulation hour*. There is a *real altar* and there are *real worshipers*. And realize that this is *before* the Millennium, described in chapter 20. It would seem that the Jews, who so desire a holy edifice on their Temple Mount, are now able finally to erect it, and begin their sacrificial system again. Yes, this is not only possible, but it seems to me assured in this passage, and in Daniel 9:26-27. Negotiations regarding the Temple Mount in our day are the major sticking point on any covenant with the Holy Land. But the time will come when a truly measurable, physical temple will emerge out of the constant wrangling and negotiating. I think it unwise to allegorize passages such as these. Anything that can be measured can be seen and touched. There is another temple coming.

Now about that command to measure. Why such commands? Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40:2-4) is told to watch a man measure a coming temple. Measurements are given so that when all of this comes to pass, God's people will be assured they are seeing the fulfillment. It would seem that the temple seen in Ezekiel is the Millennial temple. What John is measuring is a Tribulation-era temple. *Is it the same one?* Is there Biblical evidence that the temple, though desecrated during the Tribulation, will be destroyed during that time? I have not found it.

So Ezekiel prophesied a temple to come, and the one that has been built *since* his prophecy has not matched his measurements. Zerubbabel's temple, told of in the book of Ezra and built after the Persians released captive Israel, is not Ezekiel's temple. And Herod's, merely a refurbishing of Zerubbabel's, still being completed after 46 years of work during the ministry of Jesus, is also not Ezekiel's temple. The actions, the leadership, and other details promised by him have simply not come to pass. Consider:



In Ezekiel 40:2, the prophet is taken to a high mountain, as is John in Revelation 21:10. Both men see a city. Though John at first says he sees no temple (21:22), he says immediately that he *does* see a temple, namely the Lord Himself! Ezekiel, though, describes a *house* in great detail, but in chapter 43, the glory of the Lord overshadows that House (43:5), “the glory of the Lord filled the temple.” Ezekiel is told that here will be the place of God’s Throne (43:7). John is told the same thing in Revelation 22:3. Both Ezekiel and John see healing waters in that city (Ezekiel 47:1-8 and Revelation 22:1-2). Ezekiel sees that water flowing from “under the right side of the temple” (47:1). How to explain whether this temple is physical or spiritual?

The temple of the 1000 years, the Millennial temple, seems to be an actual building, a house, as seen not only by Ezekiel, but by Isaiah and Micah: “Come ye let us go up to the *House* of the Lord” (Isaiah 2:2-4, Micah 4:1-3). It seems that at the Great White Throne Judgment, when earth and heaven flee away, and the kingdom reverts to God the Father from God the Son (I Corinthians 15:24), that all *physical* manifestations of a “house” are done away and are replaced by the fullness of the glory of God in the new heavens and new earth.

All through Revelation there is reference to a temple:

**3:12**, I’ll make him a pillar *in the temple* of my God. Paul (Ephesians 2:19-22) refers to the fact that we are being built into a holy temple. This temple, God Himself, will come down with the new heaven and earth. And during the Millennium, there can be a literal fulfillment as well.

**7:14-15**, The redeemed are before the Throne day and night in His temple. He Who sits on the Throne will eventually live among them on earth (Revelation 21:3).

**11:19**, The temple of Heaven is seen along with the true Ark of the Covenant. All earthly tents and buildings demanded were pictures of this true temple (Hebrews 9:11).

**14:15**, An angel comes out of the temple to start the threshing process. The same temple is mentioned in 15:5-8 and 16:1, 17.

Add to this the statement that Jesus made about raising up the temple (His Body) in three days (John 2:18-22). And Habakkuk’s “The Lord is in His Holy temple, let all the earth keep silent before Him” (Habakkuk 2:20). Then Paul: “The Lord does not dwell in temples made with hands” (Acts 7:48, 17:24, from Isaiah 66:1). You now have a head-full of facts that God will eventually put in order. Remember that every word of God is pure. Every one of these facts will happen. There is a temple in Heaven. It has come to earth in picture form via the Jews’ holy structures, the Messiah Himself, and His Church. It will be visible once again for one thousand years after Jesus comes. Then the purely Heavenly Tabernacle will engulf all (Revelation 21:3). Yes, thank God for the day when “The tabernacle (Holy Place) of God is with man,” as in Revelation 21:3, which records the final manifestation of God’s House.

**Sacrifices (11:1)** But, you say, Jewish sacrifices are not effective any longer! True, and I'll go you one more: They never were! All sacrifices pointed to *the* sacrifice, Jesus. The Jews of our day do not, by and large, accept Jesus' sacrifice, and many of them wish to return to Moses' rituals in Moses' ordained place. Their wishes will be granted.

What will be the political price to Israel for such a move on the part of the world community? See verse 2!

**Jerusalem internationalized? (11:2a).**

I offer a possible scenario, in an attempt to describe what is happening now. Here, it seems, is the political background of the Tribulation time.

I do not read in Matthew 24 or the parallel Luke 21, that Jerusalem or its temple is to be destroyed during these awful years. The wording is "trampled." Trampled by an international force that surrounds it at the time of the profaning of the temple. This trampling will take place until "the times of the Gentiles" are fulfilled.

The "times of the Gentiles" could refer to the many years that Gentiles have ruled Israel. Some want to believe that that era ended in 1948, but the chaos that continues to describe Israel tells us that Gentiles still hold sway over serious elements of Jewish life and property. We could still be living in the times of the Gentiles.

Notice closely the wording of 11:2. Though Gentile domination has been going on for centuries, there will come a time, namely a three- and one-half-year period, when Jerusalem will be very seriously overrun by Gentile forces. I believe these could also well be the "times of the Gentiles" referred to by Jesus. In English Bibles, Jesus says "trampled," or "trodden down" and John's angel says "tread." The Greek is the same in Luke and Revelation: *pateo*, to trample.

Let me say it again. Jesus says Jerusalem will be trampled down by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. John's angel says Gentiles will trample down Jerusalem for three and one-half years.

I see a surrounding in Matthew 24/Luke 21. A desolation. All things fulfilled. Captives. People killed. People running. The city "trampled." *Followed immediately by signs in the heavens and the return of Jesus!*

As in Ezekiel's day, some escape. These are the elect. They will be hidden. Christ will meet them. More of this later.

So John, measure. Do what you see in Ezekiel. But your blueprint will be different. Jerusalem will not include the court (measured in Ezekiel 40:17-19, 28-34). This is how it will be before

antichrist is finished with it.

The court is where the people gather. Before the evil scene above, is it possible that this verse indicates in fact that *the entire city* is to be internationalized? Not just Palestinians here, but Gentiles of every stripe? So, whoever is in charge has made a major deal here. A peace treaty, to stop the suicide bombers, the constant threat of war? You can have your temple if the world can have Jerusalem. Agreed! A desperate Israel, tired of its role as the world's trouble-maker, in a masterful public relations move, makes its city a place for the world to emulate, while Judaism returns to its dead ritual. The one who makes this deal will be hailed far and wide as the "man of peace" though his other conquests will soon bring him other titles.

Then he changes his mind, or he is replaced by another, and the world is at war?

More background now, before we can sound the last trumpet. Before we move on we must trace the usage of "three and one-half years."

#### **g. Close-up:**

##### **Three- and one-half years (11:2b-3, 12:6, 12:14, 13:5)**

I believe that chapters 11-13 clue us in as to the time framework of the entire scroll of Revelation. Though technically set in the midst of describing the sixth and seventh trumpets, I see no reason why this amount of time mentioned often would not be sufficient for the entire period covered from chapters 6 to 19, that is, *the entire Tribulation*.

Notice the repetition, the beginning of which is in the prophet Daniel:

Daniel 7:25. Daniel's angel informs him that the fourth "beast" that he sees will be able to overcome the saints for *a time and times and half a time*. This formula has widely been interpreted to mean one + two + one-half, or three and one-half. Each "time" is said to equal one year. Standing alone, such mathematics would be mere speculation, but tied in with the other prophecies, it serves as confirmation.

Daniel 12:7. Daniel wants to know how long will last the "time of trouble," i.e., the Great Tribulation. He is told again that it shall be for a "time, times, and half a time." And immediately after these words is the further description of the period as a time when the power of the "holy people", or the saints, will be *completely shattered*. The beast wins. Daniel 7 and 12 are

compatible prophecies, both of which merge with his chapter 9.

Revelation 12:14. We will see again later that Israel is guarded from the onslaught of antichrist, and he therefore goes after the other saints on the earth. How long will this be? “A time and times and half a time.”

Three- and one-half years? Are there other mentions of such a time period? Well, here in chapter 11 are two more!

**(11:2)** As we mentioned above, the Gentiles will trample the holy city for forty-two months. No need to allegorize or spiritualize. Forty-two is three times twelve plus six. Three years. A half of a year. Three- and one-half years! While antichrist is rampaging against saints, he has taken control of the temple Mount, the court.

**(11:3)** And during that same time period, God allows two special witnesses to prophesy. More on that later. Notice that the time duration has changed to days now. Persons reading casually through the book will see year figures and month figures and day figures and never stop to count and see that they are the same figure.

But wait. One thousand two hundred and sixty days can only reach three- and one-half years if each year has only 360 days ( $1,260/3.5 = 360$ ) or 12 months x 30 days each. Was there ever such a system? Yes, the Egyptians had a year like this, to which they added five days at the end so it would match the movements of the solar system. In 46 B.C. Caesar’s administration created the *Julian* calendar, which was closer, then the Gregorian calculation much later.

But the older, Egyptian calendar is still in use in certain business applications to this day, and was used in this case, perhaps, to match it to the prophecies of Daniel, when 360 days could have been the norm.

The 1,260-day period is used in the next chapter, telling in a separate way how Israel will be hiding during the Tribulation.

And the forty-two months is the amount of time the “beast” is allowed to have authority, lining up with Daniel.

**Why three- and one-half years to begin with?** The answer to this goes back to the Book of Daniel, and his fascinating prediction in chapter 9:24-27. There he talks of 490 years of specific history to be lived out for the Jewish people. It is clear by comparing his prophecy with subsequent events that 483 of these years have already been fulfilled. He leaves open, however, a seven-year period at the end of all history (9:27), which will take humanity to the consummation of all things. It is in the middle of that seven year period that the *abomination of desolation* triggers the final horrors of planet earth. Jesus gave His approval to that very

interpretation in Matthew 24:15, “When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place...” then shall be incomparable tribulation. Yes, in Jesus’ day, the abomination was *still future*, although previews of it are acted out in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. Revelation gives us the *details* of what Jesus and Daniel prophesied.

Many speak of a seven-year tribulation. The Bible does not say that. It does say that there are seven years left in the Jewish calendar spelled out in Daniel 9. But it clearly cuts that period in two, and these constant mentions of the three- and one-half years confirms that the actual time of unprecedented horror will be that amount. What of the first three- and one-half years of the seven? I am not sure that God has told us.

From this point on I will be assuming that, not only is most of the book of Revelation about the Great Tribulation, but also that that Tribulation is three- and one-half years.

#### **h. Close-up:**

##### **The two witnesses/prophets (11:3-13)**

Does the world come to a measure of peace in the *first half* of Daniel’s seven years? Has a conquering prince brought some measure of hope by a deal with Israel? Does a stable Middle East seem possible at last? If so, this is only half of the truth, and for only half of the “week”.

The *Truth* is being preached by some very unpopular preachers. It is Zechariah who first sees these two witnesses. Let’s not let the imagination run too wild with them. These prophets are two men, brought back to earth. They are probably men who never died to begin with, as Enoch and Elijah. I mentioned John earlier, and many believe Moses is a possibility.

Have they been standing beside the Lord these many centuries (11:4, and Zechariah 4:14),

waiting to do this one job, then die, then be caught up to the Lord again? Of course, if they have been standing and waiting since Old Testament times, I must withdraw my notion of John being included. But it still intrigues me that an entire section of Revelation is given to tell John that he will *prophesy again*, and that his prophecy will cause him pain and bitterness, as is experienced by these two witnesses.

In the midst of a world gone, or about to go, mad with *pleasure* on one hand, succumbing to the antichrist's security package, and then mad with *chaos* as his rule continues, these two men tell the truth as it is about the "beast", about God, and the plan of salvation .

They prophesy for three and one-half years, quite possibly during the Tribulation itself **(11:3)**, working great miracles alongside the false prophet's signs and wonders **(11:5,6)**. The angel connects them solidly to Zechariah's prophecy **(11:4)**. The works that they do remind us of the plagues of Egypt and the miracles of Elijah. All we know for sure is that, whoever they are, we have no record of their death in Scripture or elsewhere, and at least three of these men were known to have been caught up to Heaven before their death.

They are indestructible for as long as they need to be **(11:5)**. But eventually even these great saints are killed by antichrist **(11:7)** and left to die **(11:8)**. Notice, before we move on, that this is the "beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit," as he is described in 17:8. A significant detail that we will look at then.

Note also in passing the name given to the city where their death will be dramatized: *Sodom and Egypt* **(11:8)**! Now that's rather shocking in the light of God's future plans for Israel and Jerusalem. First, we know it is Jerusalem of which John speaks because that is where "our Lord was crucified" **(11:8)**. It *is* a great city by any measure, since it has been around for thousands of years and still thrives. Taken by David over 3000 years ago from the Jebusites, it has been the hope of every true Jew from the time of its being made the capital of Judah and then of all Israel. But also, to this day, using Zechariah's terms (Zechariah 12:1-3), it is a "burdensome stone" to the world, yet a city incredible in its religious and political importance. Three major religions claim it and love it. Gentile nations love it or *hate it* with a passion. Oh, a great city!

But spiritually, says John, it is called *Sodom and Egypt*! If these are spiritual titles, they must be given *by the Spirit*. It is God Who sees fallen and Christ-rejecting Jerusalem as worthy, like Sodom and Egypt, of destruction. Yes, it was Ezekiel, filled with that Spirit of God, who compared the wicked Jerusalem of his day to *wicked Sodom* of a former day (Ezekiel 16:46-47). His conclusion: Jerusalem was worse! The same prophet, chapter 23, speaks of the harlotry of Judah while in her younger days *in Egypt*. She who should have known the most, loved God the least, and is therefore worthy of these great judgments she shall incur.

So utterly rejected will the prophets be by the men of this world, including the Jews of

Jerusalem, that upon their death TV cameras will capture their dead bodies around the clock for three- and one-half days **(11:9)**. The world will be utterly delighted, even throwing parties over the fact that these men are now dead **(11:10)**.

Interesting that there is such revelry in the midst of Tribulation days! The hardness of men's hearts knows no bounds. They actually love and serve antichrist to the bitter end, regardless of the mess he is causing in the world. Fascinating detail the Spirit gives us: people of earth will actually *send gifts to each other* when they are released from the power of God as demonstrated in these prophets. The messengers certainly have made a huge impression on earth-dwellers!

Then the prophets are resurrected and caught up to Heaven by the same invitation given to John earlier, "Come up here!" They rise and ascend as did their Lord **(11:11)**. It seems that this too is televised ("their enemies saw them"). Revelry is turned to awe as they watch their adversaries first stand up, then slowly rise into the air.

All of this is followed by a killer earthquake **(11:13)** that destroys ten percent of the city. There is, remarkably for these days, some repenting going on after this wild series of events, all of which is a part of the *second woe* or sixth trumpet **(11:14)**.

The specific timing of it all is uncertain. But somewhere during this three- and one-half years, a 200-million-soldier army is killing one-third of the earth's population while two prophets of God are prophesying, holding back rain, turning water to blood, striking the earth with plagues. Definitely a time of woe. Of grief. Most earthlings do not change their minds. Some, at least for a short time, give glory to God.

There follows quickly...

#### **i. Trumpet seven, aka woe *three* (11:15-19)**

In 10:7, after John receives a revelation he cannot share, an angel makes it clear that the sounding of the seventh trumpet will be the end of the mysteries of God. After that, revelation will flow freely between God and man. No more secrets to be dug into. Interesting that the angel adds in this regard,

"... as He declared to His servants the prophets." One must ask now which prophets received

such a message from God? We assume that he is referring to men like Daniel and Ezekiel and Zechariah who saw the kingdom being ushered in, the Millennial temple, the abomination of desolation, the rise of the man of sin and his overpowering of the saints, etc.

The seventh trumpet, or third woe, is closely related to the sixth seal, and the seventh bowl. It is important to continue to see the interrelatedness of these series. There is repetition, intensification. All seven trumpets are in the latter stages of the six seals. So we are actually ending the story *again* as in chapter 6. But more details than in chapter 6:

**(11:15) The announcement.** Handel lifted these powerful lines for the climactic ending of his Hallelujah Chorus. The world belongs to Jesus. He must reign now. Then (I Corinthians 15:24) He delivers the kingdom to the Father, reigning with Him forever.

**(11:16-17) The response** *in Heaven* is from, among others, the 24 elders. They are seen in a similar situation in 19:4 as the same announcement is made, but in marital terminology. The event is one: Jesus is coming.

*The response on earth (11:18)* is a bit different from the one in Heaven, as the nations are absolutely enraged. Chapter 19 speaks of this human factor also. Then there is the response *under the earth*. This is the *time of the dead*, that is, it is finally the time for unbelievers to rise and be judged, and saints to rise and be with Jesus, as also in chapter 19.

**(11:19)** The temple of God, discussed at length earlier, is “opened” in Heaven. But significantly, it stays there. One thousand years later (21:5) the Dwelling Place of the Father will actually *come to* the new earth.

And so, once more, the story is brought to its final climax. Jesus has returned to receive His kingdom. Resurrections, judgments. Here is the pre-Millennial portion of the end-time, whereas in chapter six we saw the post-Millennial events added in.

The great day of His wrath has come. And we will see it again before the Book ends. For now, we once again back up in time, and view more and more scenes of Tribulation days. Israel. The elect. The antichrist. The false prophet. And another view of final judgments.

#### **j. Close-up:**

##### **The woman, her children, and the dragon (12:1-17)**

So. Jerusalem has a Jewish temple and a Gentile population. God has a witness



represented well by two Elijah-like prophets. What else is going on for these one thousand two hundred and sixty days? Chapter 12 is given to show us just that.

**Review.** I believe we have seen this woman picture before, in chapter 7 (see there). More details are given here in chapter 12, but the overall pattern is the same. First there is something very Jewish that appears. The 144,000 there. The woman that is clothed with the sun, moon, and stars, here **(12:1)**. She must be the same as what Joseph saw and related to his family way back in Genesis 37:9-10. This is Israel. In chapter 7, Israelites from every tribe are sealed. Protected. Later in this chapter, Israel is flown to the wilderness for that same protection. Two pictures. Same event.

Now, later in both chapters is seen another group, the “rest of her offspring” who keep the commands of God **(12:17)**, have the testimony of Jesus **(12:17)**, and who washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb **(7:14)**. That other child certainly matches every description of *the church* available to us. Here in chapter 12, we see more of the church’s *washing* process, and how they come out of the great Tribulation through untold suffering. Did we not see this in chapter 7 also? Yes, indeed.

Nothing new here except for the details to paint the picture more vividly. Daniel’s prophecies are like this, you may recall. The huge statue prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2 matches with the animals prophecy of chapter 7. But with the animals, more necessary clues as to interpretation can be extracted.

Here is the first introduction to the source of all the Jewish and Christian trouble described in the book: a “fiery red dragon” with seven heads and ten horns. We know that neither the woman nor the dragon here are to be taken as literal, but every piece of information given stands for a literal being. The seven heads and ten horns will be fully explained in chapter 17 and will be seen again as a part of the “beast” known as antichrist in chapter 13. But the identity of this chapter’s monster is spelled out for us in verse 9: This is Satan.

Though one is tempted to see Jesus and Mary in the beginning of this passage, the imagery will not work for the latter portion of the chapter. The woman, after giving birth **(12:2)**, flees into the wilderness **(12:6)**, and is seen later as the mother of others, who follow Jesus **(12:17)**. This does not fit the reality of Mary’s life, but does describe Israel, who first brought Jesus into the world, then an elect people. The continued hatred of Satan for Israel through the centuries is documented history.

Interpretation so far: Satan tries to devour Jesus, through King Herod **(12:3-4, Matthew 2:16-18)**. But the King to be is born anyway **(12:5)**. That same Satan tries, during the Tribulation, to devour the Elect Israelites **(12:15)**. The suffering saints of verses 7-12 overcome this assault by being faithful until the death. No rapture is hinted at here.

So, war in heaven, conflict on earth. The man of sin is released from his place in the pit (chapter 13 and 17) and Satan, cast to the ground, uses him to rise to power here **(12:10-12)**, having lost it in heaven. Israel is protected **(12:16)**, experiencing Christ for the first time. The other saints are scattered, defeated (Daniel 7:25 and Revelation **12:11**), because they are ready to go and be with Jesus.

In the telling of the story, behind-the-scenes truths come out. Let's go verse by verse to see what we've left out.

**(12:1) Israel.** A woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet. How many have assumed this to be Mary, seeing pictures drawn from the bare facts of this verse? This is what comes from surface reading of Scripture and eisegesis. A doctrine is formed outside the text, and we force the Bible to agree with what we already believe.

**(12:2) Pre-birth.** Though the image is Israel and not Mary, it was the Israelite Mary who gave birth to Jesus. So this first part of the vision is indeed a picture of that birth.

**(12:3) The dragon.** More about these heads and horns later. For now, they stand for past world empires and a final empire yet to come. It has always been the desire of Satan to control the earth, from his forays in the Garden, and in the wilderness with Jesus, to dictators of East and West through the centuries.

**(12:4) Satan down.** Interwoven into the discussion here is the fall of Satan. It is mentioned in verse 4. One-third of the angelic host is thrown to the earth. This is further explained in 12:7-9. There is a heavenly battle between the good and evil angels. The evil ones lose and are cast out of the heavenly realm.

There is a question as to the timing of Satan's downfall. Jesus spoke of it as though it were past in His lifetime ("I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.") But Jesus could easily have been speaking of a vision that occurred to Him about a future event.

Daniel sees a vision wherein Satan seems to be cast out around the time of the end, when the daily sacrifices are being taken away. In that vision, the little horn, aka the man of sin, grows up to "the host of Heaven", and is able to bring stars (Biblical symbol for angels) to the ground.

Here it seems that upon being cast out, he appears immediately inside of Herod to devour Jesus at birth.

And does not Ezekiel weigh in to the question by stating that the anointed cherub was perfect until iniquity was found in him (Ezekiel 28:11ff)?

Satan appears on earth in Eden and harassing Job. Neither time is he necessarily a citizen of

Heaven.

When did the fall take place? I have to leave that one alone, and simply say that it did take place, perhaps in degrees. First out of the splendor of Heaven itself to the atmosphere around the earth making him the “prince of the power of the air,” and later confined to the earth itself, hence the wording of this chapter.

By the Tribulation time, he is down, and soon to be out. His last play for power is through the man of sin, that we will meet shortly.

**(12:5) Jesus born.** We are still safe in referring all of these verses to the birth of Jesus and His coming from Israel.

**(12:6) Israel flees.** Here we lose all necessity of referring to Mary, for the events of these verses never happened to her, but they did happen to her people. I believe one need look no further than Matthew 24 for the fulfillment. When the abomination of desolation happens, Israel is told to flee. Here we are told where they will be running to. Historically, we know that in A.D. 70 many were able to escape to Petra. But in my opinion, the calamity of A.D. 70 is not what Jesus was talking about. I believe they will be running again, just as the vision here portrays.

She will be in this wilderness with Jesus for 1,260 days, or three- and one-half years. This is said again later in the chapter, and, as I stated above, it is compatible with chapter 7, the sealing of the 144,000.

**(12:7) War in heaven.** The archangel Michael is seen in Daniel’s prophecies, accompanied by Gabriel. In chapter 12 of that book, Michael “stands up.” And when he does, the tribulation breaks out. Could it be that John is picking up on that same vision here, as Michael and Satan fight it out? Is the fight in heaven parallel to the fight on earth for those three- and one-half years?

Oh, that we could see what is going on behind the scenes as we are fighting things on earth. The real battles are being fought and won elsewhere, with only our prayers making any real differences.

**(12:8-9) The castaway.** I reiterate here that I believe this particular casting out brings Satan to earth, as opposed to his position in any of the heavenly realms, even the atmosphere. The reaction of Heaven is my clue.

**(12:10) Thy kingdom come.** Heaven is saying that this final casting out of Satan means the kingdom of God is nearly here! Now will be brought to pass the saying we often quote in hard times: *It’s always darkest before dawn.*

**The accuser:** Satan and his accomplices, we are told, use the mechanism of accusation against us daily. We see this working itself out in the life of Job and know that it has a reality we must also confront. He accuses us because he himself is guilty. So when he comes to earth, his desire to hurt the people of God is foremost on his mind.

**(12:11) The defense of the believer:** What Jesus did for us on the cross, and our constant talking about it, and our seeking first His kingdom until the day we die, *that* is the victory!

**(12:12) Such hatred,** stored up for such quantities of time, is lethal. Satan has more than Christians to overcome in his short time. He must unravel the predetermined will of God in three-and one-half short years. He *knows* God has never been wrong about anything He has predicted, but in his great pride he will hope for one exception to the rule.

Notice again, his time is short. From the moment he is cast out until the time he is finished, is a brief time.

**12:13, 14, His first task** is to go after Israel, the apple of God's eye, the heart of His plans for humanity. The special 144,000, as noted in chapter 7, are lured away to the wilderness, loved by Jesus, and protected by Him. They are taken to a place seemingly by airlift where they cannot be touched by Satan's rage. How long? Three- and one-half years, the entire length of the Great Tribulation.

Read again the tender words of Hosea 2:14-23.

**(12:15-16) Desperate,** frustrated, the enemy takes measures to flood, literally, the hiding place of the Jews (See Daniel 9:26 as a possible predictor of this). This could well be what is going on in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria, with the control of water for the Tigris-Euphrates, or some such vast water supply. But by an earthquake or another natural phenomenon supernaturally timed, water meant to flood the wilderness retreat will be diverted. We have seen this possibly in the sixth trumpet and will see the Euphrates again in the sixth bowl.

**(12:17) Description of the believer:** Just like the Antiochus of ancient history, an angry frustrated God-hater will find someone else upon whom to vent his fury: The Church. Like the true Jew, we are those who "keep God's commandments", as John loved to point out in his epistle (I John 1:3). We are also those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ. This is no end-time faction called "tribulation saint". This is me. This is you. This is the church of God.

The demise of the saints, as we have noted, is foretold in Daniel 7, and we have covered it in this book also, chapter 7. More is about to come.

**k. Close-up:**

**The man of sin and his helper (13, 17:7-17, 19:17-21)**

**13:1 Satan's means.** Immediately after John has seen the source of the trouble on earth, he is given a vision of the one who will be overwhelmed spiritually by that force. Recall that Satan is bound to earth. He must now use a man to do his bidding, and he will incarnate that man.

**By the sea.** One can imagine all he wants here, but I will stay with the literal when I can. The sea in Bible books is usually the Mediterranean. I believe it is important to see a world power rising from that body of water.

**The beast.** Perhaps the most obvious of the long-term background descriptions is the one regarding antichrist. It is proper so to refer to him, but John never does, in Revelation. He here calls him the beast (animal). In Daniel 7, he is the little horn on the final of a series of beasts – animals – in his prophecy. That horn rises up to supplant some of the ten horns originally on the beast. It is this conquering horn that makes war against the saints and prevails against them (Daniel 8:9-12). He controls the beast of which he is a part. This is antichrist. See in Daniel 7:20 and 25 how that animal matches this one in terms of the blasphemies he speaks. His very name is blasphemous, perhaps our first clue to “666.”

In Revelation **13:2**, the same man is described in terms of all the animals in Daniel's vision. He is especially reminiscent of the ferocious fourth beast. Notice that both the revelator (**13:1**) and Daniel (Daniel 7:1-8) see ten horns, and they both see seven heads. In Revelation the seven heads are on one creature, in Daniel there are four creatures: The lion has one, the bear has one, the leopard has *four*, and the fourth creature has one. Seven heads. Note also that John says the

beast is *like* a lion, bear, and leopard. That is, he is *like* the three beasts of Daniel.

**(13:3-4)** Here is introduced the notion that there is a death and a resurrection. More of this in chapter 17, where serious mysteries are made clear. For now, note that we are talking about a man, not just an empire. A *man* dies. A *man* comes back from the grave! Because the man comes back from the grave, the world is in awe and realizes it cannot come against such a man. The man becomes an object of worship.

Place here in your thinking the words of the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10,

*The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

In many ways he will try to mimic Christ. This is one of those ways. Resurrection. A sudden appearing. Taking authority over all.

Then there is the mouth given to the beast **(13:5)**, as in Daniel 7:8, 11, 20, 25. He continues 42 months **(13:5)**, paralleling Daniel's "time, times, and half a time" (7:25). He overcomes the saints in both descriptions (Daniel 7:21, 25 and Revelation 8:24). And he receives worship (Revelation **13:4**, Daniel 8:11). There is no question that both visions speak of the same offender.

**He sits in the temple** claiming to be God, according to Paul, II Thessalonians 2:4. Daniel 8:11 discusses the way a certain prince, not necessarily the final world ruler, will take away the daily sacrifice, i. e. break the covenant with Israel, as in Daniel 9:27: "In the middle of the week (seven-year period) he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering." Then, after that man, comes one who makes desolate. It seems in that Daniel passage that the man of sin picks up where the "Prince" leaves off. We conclude from his aversion to worship rituals that from then on, worship is to be centered on Satan's man only, much like in the days of the Roman Emperors. In Revelation **13:8, 14**, worship of the Beast is seen, and by **13:15**, it is required by law.

In Daniel 8, he is a latter-day outgrowth of one of the four successors of Alexander the Great. This means that he can only come from somewhere within the ancient Greek Empire: southeastern Europe, the Middle East, Northern Africa. A most impressive clue!

Paul knows him as "the man of sin." Once more it is easy to get carried away with imagery and history, much of which can fit. But when it's all over, this man and his partner are thrown into a lake of fire (19:20). Literal lake. Literal man. Literal partner. In Scripture it is nearly always better to take the Word as it is. A close study of Daniel and II Thessalonians reveals that only one man is being talked about here. His profile is laid out so clearly that no end-time saint will have any trouble recognizing him. Yes, previews have shown up in men like Hitler and any number of

Popes, but one man is still to come. Let no one write him off before his time. *Everything* written of him will be fulfilled.

What of the numbers describing the beast from the sea (**13:1**), “Seven” and “ten”. The *seven* seems to be world empires and/or mountains, as in chapter 17, where the same beast is described in his relationship to Mystery Babylon (**17:10**). Traditionally, Christian scholarship has pointed to Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and revived Rome as the empires that have ruled/will rule mankind with their severe politicians and religious poison. A closer look at Daniel 7 reveals another possibility. We’ll look at it shortly.

Whoever the past kings/kingdoms are, this person represents them all in one man, one final rule. The *ten* corresponds to Daniel’s “ten toes” and the “ten horns” of the beast of Daniel 7, and the ten horns of John’s later revelation in chapter 17. There is general agreement that there is a ten-nation confederation, perhaps akin to Common Market nations, that holds the final rule of this planet with the “beast” (**17:13**).

Antichrist appears after a falling away from the faith, a time when the world will easily believe anyone who will save it from its mess (II Thessalonians 2:3). It is even quite possible that his rising will *instigate* that falling away, as Roman persecutors in the first centuries of the church scared many believers out of Christendom altogether.

He is Satan-inspired (**13:2**), as Christ was Spirit-inspired. He dies, but is resurrected, as was Christ. The world accepts him as its own, anticipating Christ’s reception when He returns. As to the blasphemies that are said to come out of his mouth (**13:5**), this point is underscored in Daniel 7:8, 11, 25 and 11:36-37. Paul makes note of it in II Thessalonians 2:4. His persecutions are successful (**13:7**) and are the reason for a great populating of Heaven during this 42-month period (7:9-14). He not only has authority over the world, but over the saints! This too is borne out in Daniel, 8:24. He will be the object of worship, as stated above, aided by a false prophet described in 13:11-18. All will be commanded to make an image of the beast, perhaps something as simple as watching him on television or the internet. Those who do not worship his image must die. Your TV/computer will have become fully interactive.

I now move to chapter 17 temporarily, where this beast is talked about again. Verse 7 to begin with.

**He “was” and is not** –in John’s time, A.D. 90+, not present. Somewhere in the past, he was (**17:8**). Here is a crowning mystery, explained to us by John’s accompanying angel in chapter 17. For although chapter 17 is often considered to be all about Babylon, a full nine verses, and parts of three others, concern the beast by which Babylon is supported, the very beast introduced in chapter 13.

**The Revelation 17 beast** is “full of names of blasphemy” **17:3**, “having seven heads and ten horns.” This corresponds exactly to **13:1**. It is the same man of sin and his domain, in case you have any doubt. Notice that he supports Babylon until nearly the end, when, perhaps out of jealousy, he destroys her with fire (**17:16**). He wants all worship to center on himself. More on Babylon later.

The **truly enigmatic** portions of this passage begin in 17:8. Watch carefully!

**17:8**, paraphrased, could read, “The beast once existed, but is not among us now. He will, some day, ascend out of the bottomless pit.” In my opinion, this is a perfect fit with II Thessalonians 2:7: “The mystery of lawlessness is *already at work*.” Only *he who is restraining*, that is, the angel of the bottomless pit as in Revelation 9:1-2, will do so until he is taken out of the way. Then the lawless one will be revealed! And his coming is according to the working of Satan. That is, there will be a full-scale resurrection from the dead. God will send delusion on the world so that they truly understand the importance of this historical figure, and see him resurrected, and believe he is from God. John says it like this: “Those who dwell on earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life (**17:8**).”

He was. He is not. Yet he is! He lived, he’s not with us now, but he is waiting somewhere, under restraint. And Paul says, the mystery of iniquity is *already* working. That means the person has *already died*. In *New Testament days*, he has *already died*, and is waiting to be revealed! Clear analysis of the text frustrates the notion of a modern man rising to power, being shot, and coming back to earth immediately. Can’t rule it out, but it seems unlikely to me.

**13:3** mentions a head wound that is healed. But read more carefully. It says, “one of his heads.” This is not talking about the man of sin’s head, but one of the heads of the seven-headed beast. This is a picture. The animal is not a real animal, and the sword-wound, perhaps, is not a real sword wound. All are pictures. Yes, these are kings that have lived in history, and one of them dies, but not necessarily by a sword or bullet to the head!

In fairness, though, one of the seven rulers, Tiglath-Pileser, *did die by a sword wound*.

If the seven heads are literally seven heads of empires of the past, who might be a candidate for a resurrected and returned antichrist? Nimrod of Babylonia? Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria? Nebuchadnezzar of neo-Babylonia? Antiochus Epiphanes from Greek descent? Who will rise from the dead?

**Back to chapter 17**, and the mystery unfolding: verse 10 says there are seven kings. I just listed some possibilities, heads of empires of the past. Five of them have already fallen, passed on, dead. The one that “is” (the sixth) must mean the head of the Roman Empire in John’s day, that would be Domitian. The one who has not come, the “seventh” of **17:10**, refers, I believe to



a Prince Daniel saw (Daniel 9) taking the world by storm in his 70-weeks prophecy, and who may be the conquering white horse figure of seal one (Revelation 6:1), but not necessarily the antichrist. I believe this coming leader rules over a revived Roman Empire for “a short time”. Perhaps the first half of the Tribulation?

Then comes the resurrection of someone (17:11). The beast - antichrist - man of sin - little horn – is, resurrected, the “eighth”. But there are only seven heads!? *He is really one of the seven.* Really one of the *first five*, since in John’s day it is said that he “was”. And he will go back to perdition when he has played his role.

**So who is he?** Note again that the earth population of these last days in the Tribulation time, including most of the professing church, has fallen from the Lord and from strict adherence to and belief in His Word. The world can therefore easily be deceived. A world ruler arises, and unites the earth. There is peace and safety. But then *another ruler arises* and takes his place. This latter ruler comes from the pit, as a resurrected king of antiquity. The world believes in him. He proceeds to suppress and wear out the church, nearly to extinction. He demands that all worship him. He is a blasphemer.

In John’s day, he was. In John’s day, he is not. But he will be. Again. From somewhere before John, a world ruler arises and takes the apostate world by storm in the very last days.

For me, one plausible answer to all of the above lies back in Daniel’s prophecy, chapter 11. There, a very strange construction of sentences makes one wonder what happened to Daniel’s otherwise right-on reporting of history. All the way to Daniel 11:35, from verse 21, Daniel tells the future career of Alexander’s successors, and Antiochus Epiphanes in particular, so well that the critics call Daniel a forgery. Prophecy couldn’t be that perfect, they argue. But though the story continues in verse 36 and seems to be carrying on the same history to its finish, there are no known facts of Antiochus’ life that match verses 36–45. In fact, the text flows right on into the Great Tribulation and the end of the world!

The critics conclude: The author of Daniel is not Daniel at all, but someone who lived during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes and just guessed, rather poorly, the end of his life.

Whoa! Daniel, slow down. You skipped thousands of years of history. Could it not be that this strange reporting is nothing more than the Spirit’s way of identifying the one who will indeed “pick up” where he “left off” in the second century before Christ? Is he not waiting even now to be released, at a time when the political situation in the Middle East is similar to those ancient days, and he will have a chance to finish what he started?

This would all seem to fit with the 666 mystery (**13:16-18**). It must, you know, be the number of a man’s name. I quote from the “Last Trumpet” website, an article entitled “The

Numeric Value of the Greek Alphabet”:

*Revelation 13:18 gives us the number of the name of the Antichrist (666). There is a lot of speculation today about exactly what this means, and how to arrive at a number for a given name. When the New Testament was written, this was no mystery at all to the readers of Revelation. This is because the Greek language had no numerals. The letters of the alphabet each had a numeric value. In Greek, every word had a numeric value, which was understood by adding up the value of all the letters.*

*In the text of Revelation 13:18, the oldest manuscripts do not spell out the number 666, but simply have three Greek letters. The first equals 600, the second equals 60, and the third letter equals 6.*

*The fact that three letters were used in the oldest manuscripts, rather than spelling out the names of the numbers, as some later manuscripts do, indicates that the name of the Antichrist should be calculated by simply adding up the letters of his name in Greek. So, in reality, not only does this passage tell us the value of his name, it also illustrates the correct procedure for calculating his name.*

So, I believe, it is a Greek name we are looking for. It is true that “Antiochus Epiphanes” does not add up to 666 by this method (although *Epiphanes* by itself is very close!), but it is quite possible that he will go by a shortened form of that name that all can understand easily.

Perhaps it is worth our while to consider also that Epiphanes, a name given to several rulers of that time, but especially meaningful to a man of sin, means “a manifestation, especially of a Divine being.” *Epiphanein* in the Greek means “to manifest, to show”. And in I Timothy 3:16, Paul says that God was “manifest” in the flesh (through Jesus). John in I John 3:8 says that the Son of God was “manifested”. Antichrist will want to show the world that he, not Jesus, is God manifest in the flesh. His first name, *Antiochus*, not surprisingly, means “withstander”, according to *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*.

How will the world know that the resurrected one is truly Antiochus, and why will they even know who Antiochus is, historically? I speculate here, but it seems to me that a media campaign can handle that quite easily on a population that has become Scripture-less and very gullible. Think of the hoaxes of men like Geraldo Rivera. And who knew of Osama Bin Laden before his “big event”? But what nation of the world does *not* know of infamous Osama now? It is possible the beast from the pit will rise on live worldwide television, and immediately take his place with the greats of earth soon thereafter. And, who will be able to make war with a resurrected King? Only the Lamb.

In II Thessalonians 2, he is called the son of perdition, or destruction. Daniel sees one such

man given to the burning flames as his body is being destroyed (Daniel 7:11). Twice John says that this blasphemous character is going to perdition, eternal loss **(17:8, 11)**. We see this promise fulfilled and Daniel's picture repeated in Revelation 19:20, where the beast is captured and cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

In thus being consigned to eternal death, after rising from the dead, Antiochus becomes a forerunner of those who are damned. All men exist forever, some as saved, some as damned. Jesus and John both describe a resurrection of glory and a resurrection of damnation. But the resurrected damned are fit only for a Lake of Fire. The antichrist will be raised from the pit in a new body, thinking he is all-powerful, energized by Lucifer. But after a short strut across the stage, he will go back directly to his eternal loss **(17:8)**.

By the way, only one other man is called the "son of perdition" in Scripture. Jesus gives this title to Judas, the betrayer, in John 17:12. Is there a connection between the two in the spirit world? It does not seem to me now that Judas and the coming man of sin should be identified as one, but the allusion to such a one by Jesus is certainly worth looking at.

We will speak more of the man of sin when we come to chapter 17 and Babylon.

**(13:10)** Chapter 13's discussion of him ends with a warning, but also, I believe, an encouragement to the saints now living. Whatever antichrist is doing to you right now is going to be done to him. One day he will be captured and cast alive into the lake of fire, the second death **(19:20)**. Take heart, saints of God, be patient, hang on to the end. We win. He loses.

**The false prophet, 13: 11-18.** Aiding and abetting the political ruler will be a false religious ruler, equal in authority, with great power in his words, yet seeming to be as meek as a lamb. He is a miracle worker and uses this power from the spirit world to force all to follow the man of sin.

There seems at first glance to be little Scriptural support for an assistant world power in the last days. Perhaps only John sees this detail, we think. But then we remember that the book we are studying often tells the same story in two separate ways. Why could this false prophet not be equal to Babylon, the great world religion described in chapter 17? That would mean that religious power will ride the political power to world authority. A woman rides the beast, a false prophet assists the beast, two ways to say the same thing?

Consider: It was Rome's brand of religion that supported Charlemagne, and the entire "Holy" Roman Empire of the Middle Ages. Later that same group by its silence and signing of Concordats, gave its strength to Hitler and Mussolini, hoping that their historical territory would be restored for Papa's purposes. Yes, in hopes of world recognition and acceptance, Popes and Cardinals, representatives of the false prophecy known as Romanism, rode the back of the beasts of their day. It is quite possible that this associate dictator is none other than the head of the

harlot church, so graphically portrayed later.

If this were true, chapters 13 and 17 would be companion pieces. The only difference in the two chapters would be that in 13, antichrist is mentioned first, followed by the religious element. In 17, the order is reversed.

Another key to understanding the co-rulers is the description of their origin. The first beast rises out of the sea, corresponding to Daniel's very words in Daniel 7:2, where winds are stirring over the *Mediterranean* Sea out of which his animals arise. Could it be that this suggests an origin in the pit, as opposed to kingdoms that are earth-based? The second beast arises from the earth. His power is also demonic but is tied to the established religion of earth from the days of Nimrod. That which rises fresh from the pit now gives added impetus to the Babylonian Mysteries here for so long.

#### **Miscellaneous notes, chapter 13:**

**(13:5,7)** Important to see here that everything Satan does is given to him. As Jesus says to Pilate, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above (John 19:11)." The church in the Tribulation will need to keep remembering this: What is happening all around us is all a part of the plan. So be encouraged. Hang on!

**(13:7)** The **universality** of the antichrist kingdom. We tend to think in terms of a "Revived Roman Empire", and we should. But that Roman entity will only be the base of the kingdom. From this base, this one Satanic man will rule the *entire planet*!

**(13:9)** a **special word to the saints** who will hear. This unique arrangement of words ("If anyone has an ear, let him hear") is used only in reference to the church. Other than in those church letters of chapters 2 and 3, this is the only place in the Book where this particular formula is used. It seems the Spirit is especially eager for God's people to understand the issue of identifying clearly the man of sin, so as not to be found in any allegiance with him **(13:8)**.

**(13:13)** Signs and wonders people, take note. The antichrist's right-hand man will be a miracle worker. Genuine signs and wonders. Those who are caught up in such things today exclusively, will find some familiar things going on when the man of sin is in charge.

**(13:14,15)** The living and speaking image of the beast can be a statue, as historically thought. But the technology of our day opens wide the door of speculation. Is this a hologram? Is this a projected image on a public square? Is this interactive Television? The internet? And look again at the construction of verse 15: It seems to say that the image *itself* will cause death to those who do not worship it (Daniel 3:5)! You turn on the TV to worship at your designated time. All well and good. Oops! Forgot your time? Your TV will turn itself on and deal severely with you?

**(13:16)**, Many translations follow up on the shocking interpretation of verse 15 with another shock here, and the Greek can support it, but does not demand it: The image can also be the causative factor for the mark of the beast. That is, supposing for example that interactive TV is the means of worship, it can also be the method by which a person will be marked. So no need to travel anywhere or do much at all to get hooked up to the flow of the world. Turn on your set, push the right buttons and you can have all of this superhero that you want, including his very personal identification tag lasered right on to your skin. Your Visa or MasterCard will be billed, of course.

And equally certain, if you do not submit to all of this, you will be executed. Those monitoring your house via TV will know of your rejection. You can expect a knock on the door soon after. Or a beam of light from your computer blinding you for life.

Here before us then is a wicked scenario. Humankind has found its idol, a man who comes in with great ideas, and sweeping solutions. Israel is in the beginning at peace, Jerusalem an international city, the temple sacrifices re-established. But somewhere at the beginning of this three and one-half year period, all is changed, as the daily sacrifice is taken away, the fragile situation of the Middle East is disrupted, and bombs begin to drop. Elect Jews run for cover and are air-lifted to a place of protection. The world ruler tries to kill them but is repulsed and takes out his vengeance on the church. He is successful in killing not only many Christians but two mighty prophets of God who preach throughout this period a message of repentance. He raises a worldwide consciousness of himself through the Media and demands worship of all.

Have we all counted the cost lately of service to Jesus Christ?

As to that last verse, and the 666 calculation, we covered it above. I believe that the obvious interpretation is still the best, and when the time comes, this man's name in Greek letters will equal 666. The Biblically-ignorant world will not see this or care. And the saints will be confirming their convictions.

### I. Close-up (revisited):

#### **the 144,000 with Jesus! (14:1-5)**

Every subject brought up in chapter 14 has been discussed already or will be given a fuller treatment later. But all these events seem to occur near the end. In terms of the book of Revelation itself, we are still in between the trumpet and bowl judgments. It seems that we are generally speaking of the days of the seventh trumpet, when all the mysteries of God are being fulfilled. The Spirit is filling in more background pieces before the purely chronological story continues. One could easily suggest that chapter 14 is the least chronological chapter of the entire Revelation.

**(14:1)** At the opening we are on Mt Zion celebrating the arrival of the 144,000. Here is the completion of what started in chapter 7 with the sealing or saving of these Israelites. Jesus has visited them in the wilderness, protected them from the wrath of Satan who hates them. He has sealed them, wooed them, and won them to Himself. Recall the Hosea reading.

Let's take a closer look at Mt Zion, where they stand. The name means "fortification", and such it was in the days when it was conquered by David (II Samuel 5:7, II Chronicles 5:2), 1000 years before Jesus entered it on a donkey (Matthew 21:1-11). It was a Jebusite fortress on the southeast hill of Jerusalem, says Nelson, *op. cit.*, where the Kidron and Tyropoeon valleys meet. Soon it came to mean not only the fortress but the *hill* on which the fortress stood. Then *the city* where the hill was located. Then *the people* who lived in the city, the children of Israel.

Isaiah in particular loved to speak of Zion, out of which shall go the law (Isaiah 14:32), into which shall flow the ransomed people of God (35:10). The Redeemer Himself will come to Zion (59:20). Zion shall be the source of good tidings for all (40:9) and on and on. Jeremiah mentions it a total of 32 times in his prophecy and his lamentation. Likewise Zechariah and several other prophets. Quite often the prophets speak of the "daughter" of Zion, and most of the time this is merely a synonym for daughter of Jerusalem, or Israel. All three names are found in Zephaniah 3:14.

The statements about Zion in the Gospels and epistles are quotes from these same

prophets. The writer of Hebrews (12:22-24) alone stands out as bringing the term to one final stage of development. He sees Zion as God originally saw it, as the place where all the Redeemed, not just the Jewish elect, shall congregate, and in fact do meet even now. The Heavenly Jerusalem. The church. God Himself. This is Zion.

I say all of that to ask, where is Jesus, the Lamb, standing in Revelation 14:1? Is this a scene of Heaven? Then have we just had a rapture of the 144,000 from the wilderness where we last saw them? *No* Scripture elsewhere would support such a thing. Then has there been yet another Jewish/Christian Holocaust? When the 144,000 named the name of Christ, did they become targets for antichrist and did God have to take his hand of protection from them, that they might gain a martyr's crown? Do they have their triumphal entry as did the martyrs of chapter 7?

Or is this a picture of earth's Mt. Zion, just after the return of Jesus, as He is surrounded first by his Jewish elect? True, the voice of verse 2 is from Heaven, but is it wafting down to earth, from which the 144,000 were redeemed? Not a necessary point to make, as we have already observed that chapter 14 is out of order chronologically. Zion is a real place. Whether in the Heavenly city or old Jerusalem, there is an entity known as Mount Zion.

Perhaps the other things that are going on in this unusual chapter will give us a clue about the location of Mt. Zion and the Heavenly welcome of the 144,000.

**Other items of interest** about this meeting on the mountain:

**(14:2) the voice of many waters** we have heard in 1:15, as the Voice of Jesus Himself. The harpers we discussed in 5:8, et al.

**(14:3) The singers** we have generally identified as the 144,000 Israelites, Jewish in every way. Now more details emerge. First, they have exclusive rights to their own new song of redemption. This seems to be different from the "new song" sung by the four living creatures and the 24 elders of 5:9, though redemption is the theme of both. A third song of Revelation is sung by martyrs mentioned in 15:2-4, probably the same group as in chapter 7.

**(14:4) These Jews are virgins.** Now there is much talk by the prophets about the "Virgin daughter of Zion", for example in II Kings 19:21 and Lamentations 2:13. But in each case it is the talk of a father who is speaking by faith about a precious child, and a Father who has the power to transform from the "gutter-most" to the "uttermost". In experience, Israel had not been a virgin! One could read a "father" interpretation into this passage too, especially coupled to Paul's words in II Corinthians 11:2 about presenting the church to Christ "as a chaste virgin." We of the church have been forgiven our non-virgin-like character. God has great plans for His people, to purify us, cleanse us, and make us into the image of His dear Son.

But in this passage is something else. There is a specific statement that these 144,000 “were not defiled with women”. This is literal virginity, not the spiritual kind we are all promised. Could it be that those who are forced to flee for their lives by the Holocaust set off by the antichrist, and then spared by the protection of Christ in the wilderness, are young, or exceptionally holy people of Israel who have been waiting for the kingdom of God, like the four Hebrew children of Daniel? Once they see and accept their Messiah, they follow Him, like the disciples of old, wherever He goes. And **(14:5)** like Nathanael in John 1:51, they are Israelites indeed in whom is no guile, persons who wanted from the beginning to know God’s plan for Israel, and when they find it, they follow it. Yes, all have sinned, but these are without fault because they have experienced Christ’s forgiveness.

Then these must also be the ones about whom Isaiah and Paul (Romans 9:27-28) are speaking when they say, “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.” And Romans 11:15, “...at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” Paul lived during the days of a rejecting Israel, but anticipated their accepting of Christ one day, and compared it to a time of “life from the dead.” And, 11:25-26, “hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved...the Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

If you have been carefully following the story, a question must have arisen by now. If this chapter 14 event takes place on earth, and Jesus Himself allures His elect into the wilderness and spends these three- and one-half years with them, how is it that He is pictured later in the book as returning to earth, fighting the Armageddon Battle, and resurrecting His saints?

But if the scene here is in Heaven, how did the 144,000 arrive there?

How is it that Jesus is pictured here as Lamb, but will soon be the returning Lion who will destroy all His enemies?

Could it be that the allurements to the wilderness were done by the Spirit? Were the 144,000 simply brought there to learn His ways through the preached Word and prophetic utterances? And this picture here becomes His first physical meeting with them, at the end of the Tribulation, just after the final victory described later in the chapter?



### **m. The Proclamation Angels (14:6-13)**

Next comes a 1-2-3 series of announcements by three different angels. I believe these things could be happening simultaneously, or at least in very close proximity to each other. I do not believe there need be any tie-in to the previous vision. The Jews who were touched by God's grace are now safe with Him, whether in Heaven or on earth. That is a revelation all by itself.

**Angel 1, Close-up, The Gospel Preached (14:6-7).** At around that same time, we are hearing the announcing of the preached Gospel. As the law was committed to angels (Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19) so has the Gospel been charged to them. We understand not the ministry of Heavenly beings on the behalf of the spreading of the Good News, nor do we need to, but it is suggested earlier in the book that before messages of God come to us, they come to an angel (Revelation 2:1 etc).

Jesus said that the Gospel will be preached in all the world, and then shall the end come (Matthew 24:14). We have taken that to mean the gradual preaching of Jesus through the centuries, and there certainly can be an application there. But it seems that this Gospel is going to be once and for all proclaimed to the entire planet just before His coming.

The 144,000 Jews of verses 1-5 are no more tied into that preaching than the angel who is making the proclamation. Here again men have theorized and speculated. But in fact, these are separate snapshots. Snapshot one: The Jews mentioned in chapter seven, sealed by God, are now

with Jesus! Snapshot two: The Gospel is being preached everywhere.

We found that two prophets of God have had a worldwide ministry during antichrist's reign. Could not their message have been the same as is recorded here in chapter 14, namely "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." Interspersed with the message of salvation is this prophet-like warning that could well have been sent worldwide by electronic means.

Or, those brave saints that have been here all along are spreading the Gospel message. The 144,000 are "before the Throne of God." They are not preaching. And that picture could well be out of order. First the preaching, then the return of Christ to His own.

**Angel 2, Close-up: Babylon Falls (14:8)** Next we are seeing the actual fall of Babylon, as the visions keep coming one after the other. This fall is not specifically documented until chapter 18, but it is mentioned in passing here, giving us a good sense of the timing of this catastrophe and the other events. The seventh angel has sounded. Warnings are everywhere. Deep into the sixth seal. Last things are all in place. Only the final climactic bowl judgments still remain, and immediately prior to these last events, or even simultaneous with them, Babylon the Great is once and for all made to fulfill its destiny, spoken at least 2700 years ago.

**Angel 3, A warning and a blessing (14:9-13).** John has so far brought to mind images from chapter 7, Matthew 24, and chapter 18. Now he refers to chapter 13 and will soon move to 19 and 20. In tying together all these "loose ends" into one chapter, he lets us know just how short is the time span of the Revelation prophecy.

This passage, tied with 13:16-17, makes us wonder exactly how worship of, and the mark of, the beast are one. 13:16 seems to say there is no choice about receiving the mark. But here it is clear that the mark is given to all who *worship the beast*. So the concern of the believers in that day, and this, is that we not give our heart to Satan. The choice not to worship him and therefore receive that mark will result in proper identification being withheld. Without an ID, one will make no financial transactions. Anywhere. The truly cashless society cometh. But the true church will be exempted from it by choice.

So our secular world will gradually be turned into a religious world after all! Yes, when life depends on it, people will give lip-service to nearly any creed. Witness the "church" of the Middle Ages, whose membership shamelessly went in and out of the Roman Church system depending on who was in charge of the sword. Of course, through it all, a remnant church survived, known only in Heaven. So it is today, and so it shall ever be to the end of the Tribulation and the world. These precious few are in fact being addressed in this chapter, as in 16:15 at the sixth bowl. It could well be that **14:12-13** is a part of that same message.

**Eternal judgment (14:9-11).** Today's church needs to brush up a little on the doctrine of eternal punishment. John pictures in these few verses two classes of people, as he does in his epistle, I John 5:19. "...we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." In John's thinking, it is "we" and "the whole world." John, the "son of thunder" (Mark 3:17) who had to learn love and compassion to temper his desire to see sin judged, now is given full vent to one message of his heart. For, those same two kinds of people who lived in the first century are seen fully blossomed and ripe for final judgment. One group (**14:12-13**) is called to glory, the other (**14:9-11**) to eternal shame.

But this is no mere slap on the wrist. This is eternal. This is full strength, verse 10. This is torment. Fire, brimstone (remember John, "Shall we call fire from Heaven?") This is forever. Burned up and forgotten? Oh no, "no rest day or night." Forever (**14:11**). Any doctrine of hell that does not measure up to this word of God is watered down so as not to offend. Beware of it.

**14:12-13, a word of comfort.** We have heard about this "patience of the saints" in 13:10. This is the true church, defined unmistakably again as keepers of God's law and Jesus' faith, remaining faithful amid unspeakably evil days. They are here given encouragement to carry on, even unto death. As the believers will be seeing people die all around them, and they will be thinking back on those words of the TV preachers who told them that nothing could ever defeat them, they will need this very word of encouragement: Death is not only acceptable, but it is now a blessing! You've worked hard. You've been faithful. Now come Home and rest! I'll be waiting for you. I won't forget what you did here.

#### n. Close-up:

#### **The return of Jesus, two pictures (14:14-16, 17-20)**

Finally in chapter 14, there is a graphic description of the return of Christ, which will be covered in much greater detail in chapter 19. This collection of end-of-all occurrences would not be complete without this most significant event of all.

First Jesus is seen as a harvester with a sickle (**14:14-16**). The imagery here is akin to that of the prophet Joel, whose third chapter is a treatise on God's end time judgment of the nations. Joel 3 says God will gather all nations and bring them to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2, 12). He assembles all these people groups to do His bidding, then he sits as judge. In fact, Jehoshaphat means "Jehovah is Judge." Jewish tradition (Per Nelson) has it that this Valley is that part of the Kidron Valley between the temple and the Mt. of Olives. This would fit with Zechariah 14:3-5:

when Jesus returns to earth His feet will touch down on Olivet. From there, after the battle is over, it is a short walk to Jehoshaphat, where, as in Matthew 25, he assembles all the nations for the parceling out of rewards. "Put in the sickle," says the record in Joel and John. This is harvest time.

It appears to me additionally that this first look at the harvest, with its absence of violence and blood, could easily be a picture of the rapture of the church. Oh yes, we still believe in the catching away of the Bride of Jesus from the earth! Those who have misplaced it have not destroyed it. Jesus *will* come for His own. This could be that final harvesting of souls, when the dead in Christ rise, and those who are alive and remain rise up to meet Him (I Thessalonians 4:16-17). *He comes on the clouds of Heaven* both in Matthew 24:30 and here.

Though there are angels involved in this process, the Spirit pictures this operation as being done personally by the Son of God. He gathers us unto Himself before He continues His work of vengeance on the nations. We will see more of this in 19:11-14.

**Revelation 19:15-18** is previewed next (**14:17-20**). He appears now as a gatherer of grapes, with a similar sickle. The grapes are thrown into a winepress by an angel, and then Christ comes and tramples the press. But blood, and not grape juice, is pressured out of this cluster. This will be a time of unutterable violence and bloodshed. Jesus summons an angel to do this bloody business, yet His own Word, the Sword coming from His mouth, is employed also.

This same picture is told in Isaiah 63, where the One "mighty to save" dressed in red-stained apparel, explains His unusual appearance in terms of a winepress He has trodden, alone. 63:6, "I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, made them drunk in My fury, and brought down their strength to the earth." Isaiah speaks similarly of this in his 34th chapter, verses 1-4. More bloody details will come in chapter 19, as Christ confronts a waiting army.

**(14:20)** What are "furlongs"? The word is *stadios* in Greek and came to be the distance of the racecourse in the ancient stadiums, about one-eighth of a mile. So, 1,600 stadia would be nearly 200 miles, roughly the size of the land of Israel. Some commentaries place all this bloodshed near the city of Rome (aka Babylon), but it seems to me that Babylon's fall is just before the coming of Jesus, caused by the antichrist and not directly by Christ, as is happening here. Regardless of the place of this final outpouring of wrath, the destruction is so immense as to be beyond our comprehension. 200 miles of blood, up to four feet deep in some places!

And what about "horses" in battle? This can be (1) actual horses as we know them, still used in military ways in some parts of the world, or (2) those other horses, to whom we were introduced in 9:17 (see there) or (3) like the sickle, the harvest, the vine, and the winepress, merely a symbolic portion of the vision, meant to communicate to readers of all ages.

Is this Armageddon, referred to in the sixth bowl judgment and the sixth trumpet? All the enemies of Christ will attempt to unseat Him and will die horrible deaths in earth's final battle at the coming of Jesus. This story will be told again before the end of the book.

**o. The seven "bowl" judgments (15-16)**

The end has come and gone again. Any further talk of judgment must be a close-up, or review, of something already covered. That is where the bowls come in. Now, in the sixth seal and seventh trumpet days, in which the seven bowls are poured out, the intensity is raised even more. You will recall that the first four seals spoke of one-fourth of the earth, and the first six trumpets spoke of one-third of the people. But now, at the grand climax of it all, the figure seen will be *100%*.

The bowls are where the wrath of God finds its ultimate fulfillment. Reading through Revelation as though it were chronological would cause one to believe that the wrath falls at least three times, but in fact this is one event recorded in three places: 6:17, at the end of the sixth seal, "...the great day of *His wrath* has come."; 11:18, during the days of the seventh trumpet, "...*Your wrath* has come"; and now, **15:1**, "...the seven last plagues, for in them *the wrath of God* is complete."

**Introduction to angels and saints (15:1-4).** So, we are now talking of the period before the end of the seventh trumpet. Notice that *believers who overcome* are mentioned first. Such is the pattern in chapter 7:9-17. The overcomers of **15:2** are the same saints as those who "come out of great tribulation" in 7:14 during the sixth seal. They are identical also to the ones who "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb" mentioned just after the sounding of the seventh trumpet, 12:11. This is a continuing theme. Those who die in Jesus are welcomed home. There is a praise service when they arrive. But not all are yet present. In chapter 16, during the height of the bowl judgment, Jesus calls out to His own a warning, and an encouragement to be faithful (16:15).

**(15:2) the sea of glass.** Mention of this beautiful part of the Throne Room and the harps takes us all the way back to 4:6. A Heavenly scene precedes the revealing of the Scroll in chapters 4 and 5. There is a Heavenly glimpse before the trumpet soundings of 8:1-6. More Heaven comes at the proclamation of the three angels, 14:1-5. And now still more at this pre-wrath scene. One more view is to come: chapter 19:1-9 shows what is happening in Heaven just before Jesus comes! It is so important that readers of this book keep their eyes fixed on these Heavenly portraits, so as to understand the Holiness and power of Almighty God and His justice in doing what He does.

**(15:2) antichrist.** Notice the tie-in to chapter 13's discussion of the man of sin here at the end of verse 2. His person, his image, his mark, his number, are all defeated.

**(15:3-4) the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb.** There are two songs of Moses recorded in Scripture. One is in Exodus 15:1-21, a song of deliverance from Egypt and victory. The introductory words call it "the song of Moses and the children of Israel". It is probably the one meant here because portions of the two passages are the same: Revelation 15:4a and Exodus 15:14. Another song, and this one is specifically belonging to Moses, called a prayer of his, is what we know of as Psalm 90. This is a song of the eternity of God, and the frailty of man. In my opinion this would also be an appropriate message here. In both cases, the phrase "song of Moses" means the song composed and/or sung by Moses.

But what of the "song of the Lamb"? Except for the fact that *all* Scripture is God-breathed, and therefore "of the Lamb", I am not aware of a song sung particularly by Jesus or composed by

Him for the church to sing. In the book of Revelation, we have already seen in 5:8-10, the “new song” sung by the living creatures and elders *to* the Lamb who has taken the Book and redeemed us to God and made us kings and priests to reign with Him on earth. And more to the point, that same group of worshipers being discussed here in 15, is singing a song *to* the Lamb because of His salvation. Is this the “song of the Lamb”? Or is there coming to His people a song created and sung specifically *by* Jesus? That God sings, is more than suggested in Isaiah 5:1-6, and Hebrews 2:12.

**(15:5-16:1) the directive given.** The mood changes in Heaven. The praise meeting is suspended, and from the inner sanctuary of the temple, meaning perhaps the very presence of God as He really is, come seven most final angels **(15:6)**. In passing, note the golden “belt” or “sash”. Jesus Himself wears this heavenly gold in 1:13, and, it would seem, in Daniel 15:6, speaking of “a certain man.” The dress of Heaven is both uniform and glorious.

There is tension in the air. An announcement is made that the temple is to be off-limits until this business on earth is settled **(15:8)**. Smoke fills the temple to emphasize the point. God’s mercy has waited long enough, and must now become, as far as the damned are concerned, a thing of the past. It is the Day of Judgment. Of order. *God’s order* shall now be brought to the planet. Forever *we* shall praise Him for His mercy, but the invitation to a grace-filled salvation is now closed.

**(15:5)** The unusual joining of “temple”, “tabernacle”, and “testimony” needs to be considered. Where have we heard those three words before, and what do they mean now?

**The temple** was always the place where the glory of God could be revealed. It was never meant to be a pattern for modern church buildings, either in name or structure. It is a model of the Spirit-filled church, the Body of Christ, and Christ Himself.

Yet even the word temple does not say it all. The Jewish temple had a very holy place, and twice in the Book of Revelation we are privileged to gaze inside, to ascertain what God might say to us from there. Did I say twice? See 11:19, at the very end of the Trumpet soundings, a verse sounding very much like the one before us, talks of an open temple, wherein is seen the ark of the covenant. Presently **(15:5)** we see the “tabernacle of the Testimony.” It seems to me these two phrases are one, and this event is one. Where the trumpets have left off the bowls will now begin, or there is a oneness to the two. Chapters 12, 13, 14, and 15:1-4 are merely close-ups and asides. The train of thought now continues, and 15:5 is the signal.

**Why “testimony”?** This word is used in reference to temple furnishings, but very rarely. Its first mention is Exodus 16:34. Most of the time after this it is used in connection with the ark. The ark of the testimony seems to be a synonym for the ark of the Covenant. In Exodus 25:16, coupled with 31:18, we see the ten commandments engraved on two tablets of stone being

carefully placed in this wooden box. From that time on, this is the box of the Decalogue, the box of the Covenant, the “ark” of the “testimony”. Here in Revelation it could be that the other name for a portable “house”, *tabernacle*, is used for the box.

Whichever understanding is meant, before God’s final judgment we see Heaven’s doors open, the Presence of God manifested, and the heart of God, His very Word, seen to be the driving force of all. Soon the Tabernacle of God, wherein is His Word, will be with man, forever (Revelation 21:5). This is a transition time, not only in the Book of Revelation, but concerning all history. God has loved this evil planet so much. When He made it, He knew He had done a good thing. Now He shall cleanse it of the evil, and begin the process of moving in. Hallelujah. A great day coming!

**The seven bowls (16:2-21):**

**The first bowl (16:2).** All who have received the antichrist mark receive also a mark from Heaven: a foul loathsome sore. Or is this the outcome of the original mark of the beast? Does this morally poisonous identification with antichrist prove to be contaminating to the body also? Is the “chip” a technological carcinogen? The believers are of course exempt from this judgment, since they have not been appointed to wrath. And if we are on the right trail about the sore here, it is obvious why the believers do not manifest any health problems.

**The second bowl (16:3).** All sea creatures die! Whether this is a magnification of the second trumpet, a separate but similar judgment, or an altogether different phenomenon simply is not explained. All we know is we have jumped from 33% to 100% of sea creatures. All dead. Something from the heavens had dropped on to earth to cause the one-third to be killed immediately. What could possibly destroy the other two-thirds we have no idea, unless it just be the long-term effect of the original.

**The third bowl (16:4).** Rivers are now fully contaminated. They become blood, in vengeance for the blood of holy men that has been shed. Now, I understand the significance of “water of life” in a spiritual sense. We taste it regularly in the Lord. But I am equally convinced of the literalness of Revelation 22:1-2, connected with Old Testament prophecies such as Ezekiel’s (47:1-12), that speak of a healing water that shall fill the earth, the new earth God creates out of the horror of the old. The usable water supply, not overly abundant in many areas of the world as I write this, will one day become virtually nil. This, the pride of the blue planet, will be a knock-out punch to civilization. And for a literal earth to continue on into the Millennium, literally healed waters must be available.

**Praise break (16:5-7).** It is always time to praise the Lord. Oh, men will be cursing God by now, blaming and hating the *people of God* who remain (yes, they will *still be here!*). But in Heaven all is still well, and proper. God is just in all He does. He owes nothing to anyone but



judgment. Those who did not want His mercy will now receive that judgment. Yes, the world shed the blood of Your precious people. Let them drink blood. It is proper. It is good. The spirit of David in the Psalms has returned for this hour. God's enemies who continue to be God's enemies deserve what they shall receive. Let us not sympathize with their evil. Their hearts were corrupt, they wanted nothing of God in those hearts. God now acknowledges their desires.

**The fourth bowl (16:8-9).** The earth's people are scorched by the sun. If trumpet four (8:12) is an eclipse, what can we say about bowl four? A supernova? Does the sun here finally give out altogether, explode? Is the result of that burst of heat the scorching of humanity? How do believers endure this?

The order of events given by Jesus regarding the sun (Matthew 24): (1) Tribulation on earth. (2) the darkening of the sun and resultant inability of the moon to give its light. (3) The Son of Man comes. So here, we are *very* close to Jesus' coming.

Notice the Pharaoh-like reaction of men to the plagues: The light of the sun has gone out! But they do not repent! How cold and hard are men. Notice in 9:6, during the locust plague, the desire is to die, not to repent. And in 9:20, when one-third of the world has been annihilated, people are still continuing in idolatry, murder, immorality. It seems that only the preaching of the two prophets and a killer earthquake (11:13) have any effect on this hardness. Even with the next plague, the gradual cooling, if not freezing, of the earth, no sign of tears.

**The fifth bowl (16:10-11).** The fifth bowl is the companion to the fourth. Damage to the sun is now translated into darkness, and extreme cold, causing the pain, it would seem, of frostbite, as people gnaw their tongues, trying to keep warm, still smarting from the scorch wounds of the supernova. *All* of the beast's kingdom is in darkness. Note how believers are spared many portions of the plagues, as were the Israelites in Canaan. This is another indication that God's people are not appointed to wrath! God can spare His people *through* the trouble as well as *from* it! But though we say this, we understand that the beast's kingdom is the entire world by now. Christians must be hiding in Spirit-directed areas to escape the ravages of God's judgments on fallen man.

**The sixth bowl (16:12-16).** There is a blending now of trumpet six and bowl six. We are almost in exactly the same era of history, as all winds down to its final low. At the trumpet sound, the machinery of war begins. One third of mankind killed. But the war machine moves on, and Satan is not satisfied with world conquest, especially as He sees his dreaded Enemy taking power over nature. He must have all power himself and so he summons the war mechanisms to a final theater in the Middle East.

As at the sixth trumpet (see there), the river Euphrates is involved. The trumpeting was merely the releasing of the Euphrates angels, so that the process could begin. Here is a closer

look, behind the scenes, reminiscent of I Kings 22, where the man of God prophesies that lying spirits will convince God's enemies to come to battle and be defeated. Here what started with the trumpet is finalized. Euphrates is dry, the Kings from the East may now go to Israel. And, is it 200,000,000 people behind them, marching? Or is it, as in 9:16, 200 million horsemen, their "animals" described, not as ordinary horses, but as modern implements of war?

And oh yes: Even in the darkness of the sixth seal, sixth trumpet, and sixth bowl, *there is a church present!* Jesus chooses this horrific moment in the narrative to speak to them and remind them (**16:15**) to keep their garments clean during this evil reign. For even as in our day there is much sinning in the middle of much suffering, so it will be then. But also, as in our day, there is a *remnant church* listening for and hearing the voice of God.

The evil spirits then lead the kings of earth to Armageddon. Is this a real place? The word is "har megiddo", that is, *the mountains of Megiddo*. Megiddo itself means "rendezvous". God indeed has a final meeting in mind, a last confrontation with the sons of men *before* Jesus comes, and even *as* He comes.

As to the town of Megiddo, it was one of the many conquered by Joshua (Joshua 12:21, 17:11), and was originally a part of western Manasseh. This is one of those towns where the Israelites did not drive out the Canaanites (Judges 1:27). It was a stronghold to be prized by either side. By Deborah's day, the mountain stronghold oversaw a famous battle. Near the waters of Megiddo, General Barak routed the army of Sisera (Judges 5:19). We next hear of the town in connection with Solomon's administration over it (I Kings 4:12) and his fortification of it (I Kings 9:15). King Ahaziah of Judah, a wicked man, is wounded in battle and flees to this city to die (II Kings 9:27). Josiah of Judah, a good man in a wicked cause, is killed by Pharaoh here (II Kings 23:29-30). Later, Zechariah (12:11) refers to this Josiah incident and says there will be a similar one of great mourning in Jerusalem. This is the only clue I found that links Megiddo with Jerusalem. I was searching for such a link since most of the prophecies of the end time horrors center around Jerusalem, not Megiddo.

Nevertheless, this Megiddo location, overlooking the valley of Jezreel [aka *plain of Esdraelon*] *could* well be the site of the antichrist's last stand. It is today in what is known as the "west bank" (a derogatory term to Israel, as it refers to *Jordan's* old borders, not Israel's) and could fit the description given in Daniel of the "willful" king's frantic movements before he is given to the flames (Daniel 11:44-45). News from the east (200,000,000 soldiers coming) and from the north (Russia and company?) shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out (from Jerusalem?) and he shall plant the tents of his palace (portable throne, as in older days) between the seas (Mediterranean, Galilee, Dead) and the glorious holy mountain (Sinai?). That convergence of places could easily be Megiddo.

Notice in 16:14 they are all gathered at Armageddon prepared for the *final* battle against the Lord. It is demonic spirits that tell them to come and fight against the approaching Jesus. The sixth bowl, just before the end and His return, is the drying of the Euphrates so that they can easily gather here. The seventh bowl is the battle itself. So Armageddon is not just another world war. Armageddon is the decisive battle of that war. The end.

**The seventh bowl (16:17-21).** With the seventh bowl we *once more* come to the final portion of history. I believe it is important for us to see here the overlapping of terms that describe not only this last *bowl* but the last *seal* and last *trumpet*. Thrice the Lord brings us to the *end of all things*. This ending is the *same event*, as a quick comparing of chapters 6, 11, and 16 will bear out:

At the **last seal of chapter 6** are a great earthquake, a blackened sun, a blood-red moon, falling stars, a receding sky, the moving of mountains and islands, kings hiding in caves.

At the **last trumpet of chapter 11**, again there is an earthquake, the kingdoms are Christ's, God's wrath has come, there are lightnings, noises, hail.

And at the **last bowl of chapter 16**, again the earthquake, darkness, mountains and islands moved, a voice saying "It is done," mention of the wrath of God, noises, thunderings, lightnings, hail.

As part of that end-time climax just prior to Jesus' coming, we encounter the following:

**1. Nature in chaos (16:18, 6:12-14, 11:19).** As at the sixth seal and seventh trumpet, there is a mighty storm, an unprecedented earthquake. Mountains are leveled, hail falls, the heavens are decimated by— it seems— the explosion of our star, the sun. Yet men will not turn from their wickedness, and they continue their blasphemies (16:21).

It is into just such **chaos** that Jesus said he would come (Matthew 24:21-22). Jesus here speaks of days of unprecedented tribulation. He says He will come just before all flesh is destroyed. As we read Revelation's description of the upheavals of nature, the sun gone, skies unraveling, mountains flattening, how long indeed could the planet and its people survive without the special intervention of its Creator? Jesus' promise to come for the sake of His chosen ones lets us know again that His own are being spared the ravages of judgment, and will not be punished with the world. Just as it seems the world will go up in one last pitiful puff of smoke, He comes, calls His own to Himself, and begins the restoration process.

**Hail (16:21).** Before we move to the next event, a word about hail in Revelation. Isaiah 28:17 speaks of a time when hail will sweep away the lies of Israel. A time when the Foundation Stone will be laid, when justice will rule the earth. Other Old Testament prophecies speak of hail.

And hail was a part of the plaguing of Egypt (Exodus 9:13), mixed with fire. Pharoah came running to “repent”, unlike the men of the final generation. Hail will be evident during the first trumpet’s devastation of one third of earth’s vegetation (8:7), then here at the very end, in company with earthquakes, lightnings, thunderings, etc. (11:19). At this seventh bowl it is pointed out that the hail will be the weight of a “talent”. If, as Nelson (op cit) suggests, this Hebrew measure is the amount of material a man can carry, we can hardly imagine how brutal will be this storm!

**2. Babylon Falls (16:19, 14:8, 18:1-24, 19:1-6).** The fall of Babylon is first recorded in 14:8, in a series of angelic announcements that includes the worldwide spread of the Gospel, and warnings not to worship the Beast. Here in 16:19, the judgment of the city seems to be at the very end of all things, in connection with the final series of natural and military disasters signaling the return of Christ.

**The great city (16:19).** There are two cities called “great” in Revelation. Jerusalem wears that title in 11:8, but only there. In 11:2, the same (old) Jerusalem is called “the holy city.” On the other hand, Babylon, even as it is falling, is called “that great city”. This phrase is repeated in 14:8, 17:18, 18:10, 16, 18, 19, and 21! We assume then that here in 16:19, since “Great Babylon” is identified later in the verse, that “the great city” at the beginning is Babylon. The division of the city is evidently a result of the unequalled earthquake of 16:18.

But look! When the great city meets its disastrous end, the *cities of the nations* fall also. Either the external judgments pounding away at the surface of the earth or some internal connection antichrist has devised to make the cities of earth one city are responsible. Whatever, Babylon is *finally and fully* given her cup of wrath. This introduction is followed in the following two chapters by close-ups of this incredible city. Chapter 17 is Babylon’s *description*; chapter 18, her *decimation*, related to John by two separate angels.

Remember now, it has already happened. Babylon is down. In the next chapters, we’re just going backward a bit to watch the video of it. To see it close-up.

One note about **16:20**. Here is a strange entry into the vision. One would think that John is now seeing the post Millennial entry into eternity. But in the next verse he talks again of hail falling on men.

Macarthur surmises that the hugeness of the earthquakes, the great shakings of this planet that He promised, will cause geographical changes of a phenomenal proportion. The earth is being made ready for its new manager and must be in perfect order.

**p. Close-up:**

**Babylon's description (17:1-7, 15-18)**

Scholars have speculated about the differences in chapters 17 and 18, theorizing that there must be two Babylons being described. But careful analysis does not support that notion. There is too much that is similar. What is different about the careful descriptions of the two chapters is intentionality, not geography. The intent of the first angel (chapter 17) is to give a no-doubt identity of the woman who rides the beast. In doing so he also gives some clear clues about the beast whom we first met in chapter 13. The intent of the second angel (chapter 18:1-19:6) is to describe in detail the judgment of Babylon, and the reaction of earth and Heaven to that judgment. This horrendous but justified event takes place just before the return of Jesus.

With chapter 17, I believe it is safe to say that the Book of Revelation is now in chronological order. With Babylon's fall comes the end of the Tribulation, as it is somehow connected to the last battle of chapter 16, at Armageddon. All-out victory over evil is the order of the day. Jesus has returned.

Where are the saints all of this time? I mean, the saints on earth, and the saints that have just come with Jesus? Are they somehow involved in the battle, or seated off to the side watching their Mighty Savior defeat the world's worst? I'm not sure the Bible tells us...

**First, the description.** I confess here that the identification of Babylon still contains mystery for me. Some see the entire book as mystery, but this mystery is labeled such (**17:5**). I spent from 1992-1996 researching and writing about Babylon, tracing her history from the infamous tower of Genesis 10 to these very chapters in Revelation (*Scarlet Threads*). My conclusion was that there has nearly always been a "Babylon", a holder of the Satanic mysteries, a promulgator of false teaching and man's religion. I further concluded that those mysteries and falsenesses were passed to the institution in Rome that still exists as a world power. I hesitate to speak of the Roman "Church" for the people of God wear that title. "Church" must not be used glibly. The church is the *called out* of God. Yes, even associated with Rome are those who know Jesus Christ. But when we speak of Babylon, we are really speaking of the ongoing Roman *Empire*, the political machine that seized power *by means of* the church, added Babylon's teachings, wielded Babylon's sword, donned Babylon's garb. The 17th chapter identifies a city ruling over the kings of the earth and sitting on seven hills in John's Day. There is no question of her identity.

And yet even in the book I wrote I had to honestly admit into evidence a parallel series of facts which are equally viable. The prophecies concerning physical Babylon have yet to be fulfilled perfectly. The city whose remains are now in Iraq never died abruptly as prophesied. It continued on and on. Even in Jesus' day many Jews lived in Babylon. But the record is sure. Babylon is to be extinguished *quickly*, as prophesied yet *again* in the chapters before us. Let us proceed carefully through these two plus chapters. Every detail counts. Notice just how much space is given to this mystery compared to all the others.

Lest we become content with too general an explanation of this passage, we follow the text carefully and listen to the wisdom given by no less than an angel of God. First he invites John to come along and see the following person:

Babylon is a woman (**17:1**). In Scripture the two best known women, spiritually speaking, are Israel and Christ's own bride, the church. The woman before us has long lost her virginity and is not married to God at all, but to everyone willing to pay her price. Her description reminds us of another woman in the prophets. Zechariah speaks of a woman sitting inside a basket, carried through the air and deposited in the land of Shinar, old Babylonia, where a house is to be built

for her. We say with Zechariah, “This is Wickedness (Zechariah 5:5-11).”

She sits on many waters. Interpretation for this is clear from verse 15: The waters stand for all the people over whom she has spiritual authority.

Babylon is a harlot (**17:1-2**). She has spiritual intercourse with the rulers of the world. She rises to power on her back, in bed with the powerful. Take away the power of men, and she has nothing. She is not only a fornicator herself but *spreads* her wine via the golden cup she carries (**17:4**). The cup of her fornication brings us back for the first time, but not the last in these chapters, to the prophets who saw Babylon before. Nothing has changed but location. Jeremiah 51:7 reminds us that “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged.” The nations did it then. The nations did it in John’s day. And they are mad still. They are drunk with the wine of her falseness.

**(17:3)** Now we are in the “wilderness”. Why is this woman, later called a city, seen first in a “wilderness”? I believe the tie-in here is to Zechariah’s *Shinar* prophecy, mentioned above. In this wilderness, John is for the first time seeing what the angel was describing. The woman is riding on an animal. Whoever the animal is, he is the one responsible for her power, and when he decides to throw her off (**17:16**), she is history.

More about the woman (**17:4**). Her personal colors are purple and scarlet, the regal colors of Rome’s powerful. She is unquestionably rich. As is Rome. And she has the aforementioned cup in her hand. It is filled with things God hates, poisonous errors of word and lifestyle and worship.

On the forehead (**17:5**), in her mind and soul is imprinted the title of Babylon. She alone is responsible for all earth’s abominations. Those who preach another Gospel, another God, another Book, another way of salvation, shall bear the blame for all eternity for earth’s woes. God created an earth that was pleasant and manageable by man. It is out of control now because from the beginning man wanted to go his own way. Babylon’s religion is based on this will of man, in direct opposition to the will of God.

This woman is bloodthirsty (**17:6**). She desires to kill the people of God whether in old Israel, the covenant Jews, or in the church of God. Saints, martyrs, all fall slain before her. The history of Roman religion from the Caesars to our own day is a history of blood. I feel no need to document this fact at present. My book *Scarlet Threads* may be a resource for those who wish to investigate further.

John is aghast (**17:6–7**). He can’t believe it. Could it be that the reason for his horror is that this woman reminds him of someone or something he knows well? Is it Christianity without Christ that shocks him so? Oh may it be a shock and a horror to us! The angel offers to solve the mystery. After the following verses then, we ought to come away with a perfect understanding

of who is the woman, and who she is riding to power. May the Lord clear away the dullness of our vision so that this outcome truly results.

**A clear statement (17:18).** Before we begin probing into the mind of the Spirit about the “beast”, let us find yet one more identification of the woman on him: She *is* the city reigning over the kings of the earth in John’s Day. She is Rome. Could anything be clearer? Daniel saw it. Rome rules, in a greater or lesser way, until the end of time. Has any world power since Rome ever dominated the earth? Do not one in every six people to this very day on the planet claim some sort of allegiance to Rome? Is not the direction of Christendom beginning to go back toward that city? Is not European politics partially dependent on what happens there? May God awaken his people!

But having said all of this, I still reserve the right to look to the prophets for something else. Think me not double minded here. “Babylon” has worn many faces and may yet wear another one. More of this Old Testament connection in chapter 18.

**q. Close-up:**



**Once more, “the beast from the sea” (17:3, 8-14)**

We saw earlier that chapters 13 and 17 might indeed be companion pieces, both telling of the two entities, beast and rider, that will in harmony do the will of Satan in the last hours of history. Certainly, if this is true, there is added significance to the fact that the woman “sits on many waters” (17:1), and the beast, correspondingly, rises “out of the sea” (13:1). So, though chapter 17 is widely thought of as being about “Babylon”, equal space is given to Babylon’s chief client, “the beast.” Likewise, the beast shares chapter 13 with “the false prophet”, quite possibly Babylon’s head.

Antichrist is first mentioned in **17:3** as being a scarlet beast. The woman herself is clothed with the same color (17:4). Only One Other wore scarlet in the New Testament, Jesus Himself, in His humiliation at the hands of Herod’s men (Matthew 27:28). Though He is and was a King, and shall reign forever and ever, how unfitting it seemed for the Christ to be clothed in kingly garb before the time. How unfitting to see His followers so bedecked. How clearly these excesses of dress and things material identify the *professing* church as of the beast!

Next in **17:3** comes the indication of the “names of blasphemy”, tying him squarely to the beast of 13:5-6. Likewise, the reference to seven heads and ten horns takes us to 13:1 and portions of Daniel.

The description of the beast then continues in **17:8**. We have explained earlier that this passage relates that a man who has already lived on this planet is even now awaiting to be released from the bottomless pit. Paul agrees in II Thessalonians 2, and John’s record of an angel in charge of that pit adds light (Revelation 9:1). He will come back to the earth, do his work, be destroyed, and be lost forever.

In **17:9-10** we are told that the seven heads on the beast have a double meaning. First, they stand for seven mountains or hills (the word in the Greek can mean either) on which the woman sits. Tie this to **17:18**, and of course we have located the city of Rome: “The woman whom you saw *is* that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.” Here is established that “heads” represent rule, the present rule being on this seven-hilled city.

But the angel takes it a step forward (**17:10**): The seven also means seven “kings”. I stated earlier the traditional way that commentaries connect this to world Empires. And it is true that there cannot be a king without a kingdom. But the word *is* king, not kingdom. Perhaps it would be profitable to look closer at these Empires and single out the king being considered by the Spirit.

It is obvious from even a short study of history that not every ruler of every Empire was dead set against God and God’s plan. It seems to me that there could easily be one man in the major

kingdoms that rose up and fit the description of the man of sin for that generation. One man who from time to time pushed Satan's agenda until it became the world's agenda. He would have to be a blasphemer. Anti-God or anti-Christ. He would have to have a serious hatred for Jews and/or Christians. A dictator with all authority over his people. And as we shall see, a king of Babylon. By John's day, *five such men* had fallen, says the angel. One ruled on the Roman Throne. *One is yet to come in our own future.*

And then one more **(17:11)**. That is eight. The man of sin is one of those seven, who rules a second time! He *was*, in John's day. He *is not* on the earth in John's day. And yet he *lives*, somewhere. He arises from the pit, synonym in many Scriptures for the grave, though the angel is restraining him for now, says Paul. He arises in his "resurrection body" like Jesus did. He fools the world. He goes to perdition.

Now we must certainly stop and look back into history to find the other men. If I have discovered the truth about this matter, there are surely at least seven men from whom the Spirit can give us grace to choose the very one being exposed here as number *eight*. Did I say exposed? Oh yes, we are to know this mystery. The facts are all out there. John marveled at it all but was mildly rebuked! He was told **(17:7)** **that** the mystery is solvable! Again I insist, the Book before us is not the Book of unanswered mysteries, but the Book of Revelation! Those who seek these answers must surely find them.

**Seven men.** I cannot begin my study in Egypt, though I understand the thinking of those who do. In my opinion, the mysteries of the Enemy began at the Tower of Babel, with one Nimrod. I have seen him labeled "the first antichrist". In Genesis 10 we read of his greatness and how he actually founded the cities of Babylon and Nineveh, the two capitals that would rule the world from his day until near the end of Old Testament history. Even Persia, which rounds out the secular history that serves as Old Testament background, has legends of one who hunted with dogs and leopards. His fame as a world leader has given rise to myth and fable in many cultures. Should not the founder of nations be considered the first of the "men of sin"? Josephus, Jewish historian, in his *Antiquities I, 4* says about those early days:

*"...the sons of Noah...descended from the mountains into the plains and fixed their habitations there; and persuaded others...who were very loath to come down from the higher place, to venture to follow their example...God commanded them to send colonies abroad, for the thorough peopling of the earth...but they did not obey God [since they had] the suspicion that they were ordered to send out separate colonies, that, being divided asunder, they might the more easily be oppressed. Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such affront and contempt of God...He also gradually changed the government into tyranny...[bringing] them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if He should have a mind to drown the world again..."*

*Fausset's Bible Dictionary* tells more of this historic and legendary figure. Read also Alexander Hislop's *Two Babylons*.

Before moving to man number two, let me point out here that since the first man in the chain is the founder of Babylon, and the last one supports Babylon intimately, it is possible to search, I believe, for the successors of the king of Babylon only, to find the men we are looking for. I discovered that there are 133 such men. They date from Babylon's early beginnings in the 2000's B.C. to and past the end of Babylon proper, through Assyria, Persia, and *even Greece!* Yes, Alexander the Great *and his successors* all called themselves the king of Babylon.

Moreover, Isaiah pinpoints a man with this title in his apocalyptic message recorded in chapter 14. Here one called "King of Babylon" is somehow related to Lucifer! He is said to have weakened the nations. His pride exalts him to exaggerated thoughts of his own deity. Yet he is brought to the pit. Sounds a lot like Revelation's accounting of the details. Written 800 years before John.

**Man number two.** Historically, the kingdom of Assyria with Shalmanezar I at the helm, rose up and overpowered Babylonia around 1300 B.C. Nineveh now rules. But Nineveh is also from Nimrod. And Assyria's men will call themselves king of Babylon also. It's in the blood. Babylon is the mother of all abominations and must give her name to them. Historical records assist us with this label through the Grecian Empire. John the Revelator adds Rome to the list.

One of Assyria's most powerful rulers was Sennacherib. His reign is mentioned briefly but with great significance in God's Word. Through his men he actually challenged the God of Israel and the Israel of God in the 700's B.C. (II Kings 18), as he was snatching up real estate all around the Promised Land. In fact, he was successful in the overthrow of the northern kingdom (Israel) and felt he could lay claim to the South (Judah) also. His pride and self-assurance turned him into a blasphemer, one of the prime requisites for Satan's men (II Kings 19:22). His hatred for Israel and plan to destroy them, also revealing his character and its source, was intercepted by God through the intercession of Judah's king Hezekiah and the prophetic utterances of none other than Isaiah (II Chronicles 32).

Both Micah and Isaiah speak of one they call "the Assyrian", a true enemy who will be defeated by the Lord. Like Isaiah's words about "the king of Babylon" it seems almost like an end-time statement in both cases, leading some to believe that the man of sin will indeed be that ancient Assyrian. I can almost believe this myself, but of course only in the light of a resurrected king as John predicts, not necessarily as a revival of the Assyrian nation today.

For the record though, Micah does say that the one born in Bethlehem, the Messiah, is going to be the one who will deliver Israel from "the Assyrian" (Micah 5:2-6). And Isaiah, in the same chapter that he speaks of the "King of Babylon" and Lucifer (14), later refers to the

“Assyrian”, who will be broken, removing the yoke from Israel.

Now I have suggested earlier that I believe it is Antiochus Epiphanes waiting in the pit of Revelation **17:8**, and I think I have good reason. But I can understand the reasoning that would lead people to think it is Sennacherib. One other item that points to this Assyrian: To my knowledge he is the only one of the seven who was slain by the sword, (II Kings 19:37). Now, the wording of Revelation 13 does not in my opinion *demand* a sword wound to a human, but I still find Sennacherib intriguing and worth more study. I refer interested persons to a helpful book known as *The Assyrian Connection*.

Who then is third of the five kings that have already fallen? Babylon returns to power in the early 600's B.C., and of the Neo-Babylonian kings, the greatest by far is Nebuchadnezzar. He is so great, and so powerful, and so creative, and so against Israel at times, that our modern ruler Saddam Hussein was convinced that Nebuchadnezzar should be brought back to life in his (Saddam's) own person! To this end he “rebuilt” Babylon on a miniature scale, and placed his own name on every brick.

Nebuchadnezzar's reign is well documented in Biblical and extra-Biblical sources. He is in Kings and Chronicles and Isaiah and Daniel. He besieged Jerusalem, and took King Jehoiachin prisoner, as now backslidden Judah is not even to be protected from the invader. Their sin is just too heavy a burden around their neck, and they must go down. He carries away first much of Jewish treasure and people, leaving only the poor (II Kings 24:13-14). He builds a siege wall around Jerusalem (25:1), kills King Zedekiah's sons, even blinding Zedekiah in the process (25:7). He burns the temple (25:9), captures the rest of the people (25:11) and actually places in the temple of Marduk at Babylon, the treasures from the temple of God (II Chronicles 36:7). Marduk is a mythical descendant of Nimrod, and one can even see three letters of Nimrod's name in the later manifestation.

Now it should be seen that, as Jeremiah recounts in chapters 21, 22, and 27 of his prophecy, Nebuchadnezzar is a “servant” of the Lord, even though unwittingly and for his own reasons. He is God's whipping-boy for His people. But as Pharaoh was raised up for the purposes of God and later drowned in the Red Sea, so judgment will fall on Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon for their treatment of Israel (Jeremiah 50-51).

Daniel recounts incidents in Nebuchadnezzar's life, subsequent to the fall of Jerusalem. His insights into the varying degrees of that monarch's devotion to Yahweh are helpful in our understanding of his heart. Nebuchadnezzar seemed to be pleased with Daniel and his Jewish companions, as he had been with Jeremiah before them, yet he continued on in his idolatry and especially his unbearable pride. The image of gold (Daniel 3) which by the way previews the image of the beast (Revelation 13), was erected to remind citizens of the greatness of the King. This

statue became the reason for the punishment of the three young Hebrew friends of Daniel. Yet God breaks through into Nebuchadnezzar's life by saving them from the fiery furnace. Earlier, Daniel's revelation of the meaning of a troubling dream, had likewise awakened him to the greatness of the God of Israel. His respect grows from *including* the true God with his own gods to honoring that God as *supreme*, but never to worshipping Yahweh *alone*.

Later in the story (Daniel 4) we see Nebuchadnezzar thinking back on his glory with satisfaction and *pride*. At this point he is humbled before the Empire but is later restored. Altogether then, a proud, sometimes blasphemous, idolatrous, antisemitic king of Babylon was this Nebuchadnezzar, and for that reason we include him in the list of antichrists.

In all fairness, I must add that MacArthur is convinced that he will meet Nebuchadnezzar in Heaven. That may be taking the doctrines of grace to the extreme, but who knows?

Babylonia falls again, and is replaced by Persia whose Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in 536 B.C. Here it becomes more difficult to find a man who fills the bill as "man of sin" of the hour. Yet, judging from the description of the Revelation 13 beast in terms of animals, there is no doubt that the bear, or Persia, must be included in the history of the man of sin. Now, the Persian Emperors were despotic and often cruel, and definitely worshiped the wrong god. However, they were by and large friendly to Israel. Cyrus, who inherited the captive Jews, immediately released them. Succeeding rulers tried to support the growing state of Israel against foreign elements of that day who did not want her to prosper.

And were the Persian kings also "King of Babylon"? Yes, until the coming of Xerxes, several Emperors later, this was the honorary title they claimed. And Xerxes? Though he is a legitimate king of Babylon, it is said he "illegitimized" several generations of coming rulers by storming the Babylonian temple of Marduk, aka Nimrod. The idea is, that it is Nimrod who gives authority to the King. No Nimrod, no King. Knowing that that was the feeling, even in Persia, lets us believe that we are on the right track in looking only at these Babylonian kings as candidates for the man of sin.

Greek Alexander the Great, it is said, restored Marduk to his place, and for many generations the Greek rulers wore the title again. So, for example, the Bible's Artaxerxes (Ezra 4) is not a king of Babylon, whereas Ahasuerus (Xerxes, Book of Esther) and Cyrus (II Chronicles 36:22-23) are, for the above reason. Could either of them be the "antichrist" of the Persian Empire?

Consider the book of Esther, and the wicked plot of Haman, the highest ranking official in the court of Xerxes (if indeed Ahasuerus and Xerxes are the same person, as many believe). Though the Persian ruler was not possessed of hatred for the Jews, he did submit to Haman's Hitler-like plot that all Jews be destroyed. Genocide we call it today. Through the intervention of Esther, the wickedness of Haman and Xerxes was superseded by a plan for Jewish self-defense.

But it would seem that any ruler who, as king of Babylon, decreed the extinction of God's people, whatever his ignorance or motivation, would qualify as a candidate for "beast."

Next the great Alexander storms through the Persian Empire in the name of Macedonia and Greece. The Greek Empire follows. Alexander is king of Babylon in name, and yet he favors and spares Israel in his conquests. When he dies, his kingdom is divided four ways, as prophesied by Daniel. Out of one of these splits (Daniel 8:8-9) comes "the little horn." Bible scholars who are convinced the Bible is not totally true tell us that that horn must be Antiochus Epiphanes, ruler of the largest portion of the Greek domain. Bible believers, however, point out that, no, this cannot be Epiphanes, for the passages about what happens are always couched in an end-time setting. Perhaps it is time for these two positions to merge and declare that it is possible for one man to live in two eras. Of course, he must be resurrected to do that. As you know now, this is what I believe happens.

Consider the wickedness of Antiochus and see if he qualifies to be an "antichrist". He was treacherous and deceitful. He wore the title "King of Babylon." He was driven out of Egypt by the Romans and in fury he unleashed evil on Jerusalem. He broke a treaty with that city in order to plunder the temple for its wealth. He forbade Jewish sacrifices, according to Josephus, for three and one-half years. He slaughtered many Jews. He burned buildings, knocked down city walls. He built an idol altar on God's altar, and sacrificed pigs on it. This is the Old Testament version of the "abomination of desolation." But Jesus in his day said that that abomination was still future. He referred people to the book of Daniel. But it had already happened. But it will happen again. Do you see the confusion regarding this man Antiochus? Is he the once and future king?

Antiochus compelled Jews to forsake their worship, making them build temples to his gods. He allowed no circumcision. Many yielded to these pressures. Those who did not were whipped. Or torn to pieces. Or crucified. Or strangled. The Book of Law was destroyed. He was a proud man obsessed with his own worth and deity. On coins you will see his name as *Theos Epiphanes* "God Manifest", the very description of the Son of God (I Timothy 3:16).

We mentioned above also the strange case of Daniel 11. No one questions that 11:21-35 has to do with the wicked first reign of Epiphanes. But 36-45? With hardly a clue we are suddenly in the end times, even on into chapter 12 where history is climaxed. From 11:36 to the end is antichrist, all say. But if you blink you'll think for sure it is Antiochus, though none of these things ever happened in his life! Can you see that perhaps the Spirit is saying right here in plain sight that this latter-day figure is *also Antiochus*, raised from the dead?

**Nimrod, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Xerxes, Epiphanes.** A possible quintet of rulers. These five have fallen. *One is.* Now, since we live in the same Roman era in which John lived there is a sense in which that "one" still is! The Empire that ruled in John's Day has never been replaced,

only greatly diminished. If we were to use Daniel's statue vision (Daniel 2) as an outline of history, it would begin with Nebuchadnezzar's Neo-Babylonia, according to the interpretation, continue to Medo-Persia, then Greece, and finally Rome, the "two legs" (of Daniel's vision statue) which would attach to the feet kingdom of the last days. We still live in the "legs" days of Rome. When the Spirit opens the eyes to this revelation, my but does one's world view change!

**One is.** But we were saying that up until now there are men who represent these various ages and Empires, through whom Satan revealed seven heads. If they are indeed the same as Daniel's seven, there must be bear, lion and leopard components, not to mention the ten-horned beast portion. Put together all the kingdoms of men and Satan's power, and you have this man of sin.

The man chosen to represent the Roman days is the emperor who placed John on Patmos: Domitian. Because of the movies and other knowledge of these days we tend to look at *Nero* as the typical antichrist figure coming out of Rome. Nero was a mad man and an antichrist of sorts, for sure. But consider this Domitian: To the embarrassment of his peers, he was the first of the Roman Emperors to suggest, then demand, his own self-deification while he yet lived. Prior to Domitian the Emperors had the courtesy to advise their people to wait for their death before allowing them to be called a god.

And, by virtue of the fact that John the Revelator has equated Rome with Babylon in this very 17th chapter, we must see Domitian as "King of Babylon" also, though the phrase was not used by men after the Greek rulers. His hatred of Jews likewise qualifies him. It was so strong that Christianity was persecuted severely because it was considered a *Jewish* cult.

Domitian levied a tax among the Israelites to equal the amount they normally would have given to their temple, destroyed some 25 years before by the Roman general Titus. He demanded, further, that Christians and Jews alike recognize the Emperor as God or pay the price. Those who refused either were killed or banished. Even the Emperor's own cousin Flavius Clemens was killed, charged with atheism for embracing the one true God.

Five have fallen. Domitian is. One is still to come. He will be number seven. It is here that we are struck with a little-recognized revelation in the book: *The next world leader will be neither the Christ or the antichrist.* Number *seven* (17:10) is distinct from number *eight* (**17:11**). *Seven* rules a "short time". Granted, the antichrist, *eight*, rules a short time also (12:12) but I wish to emphasize that these two men are as distinct from each other as the number seven is from the number eight.

We have established that number eight is the man of sin. He is the one (**17:11**) who is going to perdition after he rises from the pit. He is, further, a resurrected form of one of the first seven. These facts are indisputable. Many who have come this far in their understanding have

jumped to the conclusion that number *eight* is simply a resurrected number *seven*. I believe that will not work. Let's do the facts of **17:8** again: The beast *was* (from John's perspective). He is history already in John's Day. "Eight" cannot therefore be number *seven* or number *six*. He must be somewhere in numbers *one to five*. I have given evidence above that points to number *five* or perhaps to number *two*. In this regard remember Paul's testimony also, in an already-quoted passage. Paul says that even in his day (II Thessalonians 2:7) someone is restraining the man of sin. When that restrainer is taken out of the way, the lawless one will be revealed.

**Who then is number seven?** He must be a "king of Babylon/Rome", a world conqueror whether by politics or force, anti-Jewish, anti-Christian, very powerful. Perhaps the opening four seals of chapter 6 define this man and the trouble he starts. Those four seals do seem to be disconnected from the other three. It is quite possible that their time span is the first three- and one-half years of Daniel's 70th week (Daniel 9). That would be a short time equal to the "short time" of antichrist. Here would be the time for Israel to be given all it wants politically, in exchange for all the world wants from it. The masterpiece of all political deals, following a time of world strife. Yet, somehow, he brings a measure of peace to the Middle east as Europe rises to power, gradually swallowing up all vulnerable nations in its path, Hitler-like. It seems that America by this time will be second-rate, *or worse*. The idea of making America great again will long have passed, it seems to me, and instead America will be striving simply to *survive* like all the other nations that forget God.

This number seven is the man who *could* also fill Daniel's description of "the prince who is to come" (Daniel 9:26 ff). He seems to have conquered the city of Jerusalem, then brought it to terms, confirming a peace treaty of seven years with Israel. But in the middle of this "week" this prince is forced to cut the relationship, take away Jewish sacrifices, and *another man* is introduced: "on the wing of abomination shall be one (not the prince!) who makes desolate..."

There are other clues in Daniel. 8:11-12 tells us that the little horn is given an army to "oppose the prince of the Host" and the sacrifices. Could it be that number seven is here being threatened by number 8? See also 11:31. The "prince", it seems, confirms the treaty but the little horn breaks it.

Could it be that antichrist's appearance will first be in the temple itself? Paul says he will be there, claiming to be God. That would certainly put an end to Jewish sacrifices! I believe this is what Jesus means when he says that there will be yet another "abomination of desolation" in the last days. He says it is the one spoken of by the prophet Daniel. It is an abomination so great that neither the former Antiochus who sacrificed pigs on the temple altar, nor the Roman Titus, who raised up idols there, could fulfill it. The final abomination is a man himself claiming to be the Lord God.



Another word about number seven. If Babylon is Rome, and the Pope is the head of Babylon, is it possible that the seventh king is the last Pope, a political mastermind who aggressively spreads religion by the sword in connection with other great religions such as Islam? And rather than killing him, will the antichrist, number eight, ask him merely to join his team? Will number seven in fact become the false prophet? We read of no murder. There are two men who rule the world at the end, beast and false prophet. Could they be number seven, and eight together?

**Number eight (17:11).** He is a composite of all the evil men who have blasphemed God, grabbed authority, ruled from Babylon, and hated God's people. He will have direct infusion of Satanic power, claim to be God, sit in God's temple. He rises from the dead, reigns three- and one-half years with incredible world-wide power, and is then slain by Christ himself, and dumped in the lake of fire.

**The "ten kings" (17:12)** have been with us since Daniel's prophecy also. Sometimes they are ten toes, sometimes ten horns, but always they are the final world government. Most have theorized them to be a revived Roman Empire with ten nations. In light of the fact that the beast rises from the sea, that is, the Mediterranean, we may look for a Mediterranean alliance composed of European and Islamic nations, or worse, a Europe alone that is Muslim by then.

The mystery of the ten kings continues to intrigue us. I was investigating this phenomenon back in the '90's and wrote about my findings in part five of the *Scarlet Threads*.

*Many have been the speculations of modern-day Biblical prophecy students regarding the coming "United States of Europe," a power already being felt in the economic world. There is no doubt that an amalgamation of European powers will far eclipse the United States, will change the entire balance of world power, and in the process begin the fulfillment of the "10-toe" imagery of the Prophet Daniel.*

*The ten toes of the image Daniel saw, flow from the two legs on that same statue, which we have been identifying as the two divisions of the Roman Empire.*

*Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, all Rome-dominated countries, lead the way in 1957 by joining their customs union (Benelux) to giants Italy, France, and Germany (also countries with Roman Catholic majorities), in what becomes known as the European Economic Community.*

*The treaty which makes all of this official is signed in Rome. From the New York Times, March 25, 1957:*

*"Rome, March 24- Two treaties destined to change the course of history will be signed in Rome tomorrow afternoon..." The article indicates that one of the treaties will create a pool of the six countries for the development and exploitation of nuclear energy, "principally" for peaceful uses.*

*There is great pomp and ceremony, schools are cancelled, flags are flown on all public buildings. It is quite a big event, but only the beginning. Catholic Spain, Portugal, Austria, and*

*Ireland follow suit. Non-Catholic nations join, but their place in the community continues to be unstable.*

*To use Scriptural terms, it would seem that the beast is rising out of the sea before our very eyes. I speak of course of the Mediterranean Sea, where he has tried to rise several times before. But recently the Loch Ness Monster has been given more attention than this threat to the entire world's security.*

*Nevertheless, the beast shall rise, and on its back will be the same woman that has kept her grip from the days of the Caesars.*

What seemed to be the clear fulfillment of Daniel fizzled out later as 10 became 20 and 30 and... the excitement has cooled a lot. There are 27 nations in the European Union today. But that part of the world still needs our attention.

Quite some time later I ran across this interesting piece of information, which I published in a book titled, *The Seventy Sevens of Gabriel*.

***The New Mediterranean Union Seeds of a New Roman Empire?***

*Posted on Oct 9, 2008 by Tom Robinson*

*A media circus was in full swing as U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama was greeted in the Middle east and Europe as a political superstar in late July, 2008. But a potentially far more important development in that part of the world the week before garnered little attention...*

*On July 13, leaders of 43 countries surrounding the Mediterranean (from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East) joined together in Paris, France, to launch a new regional union—the Mediterranean Union or, as it's now officially called, the Union for the Mediterranean.*

Another article that will help you understand what is happening around the Mediterranean was written in 2018. It begins like this:

*Welcome to Club Med. Not since the days of the Roman Empire have all the lands touching the Mediterranean fallen under the aegis of a single government or organization. There's the United Nations, of course, but July (2008) saw the establishment, on the initiative of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, of the "Euromediterranean Partnership" linking the European Union (EU) to every Mediterranean nation except (at least for now) Libya.*

*The rest of that article is at <http://www.bestofsicily.com/mag/art279.htm>*

*So... China is not the coming world power. Not Russia either. Or Islam. I suggest we follow this story of the Mediterranean as the future headlines of the planet.*

Now the Revelation narrative moves ahead of the present considerations to that tragic decision of antichrist – for him – fed by demon spirits who collect men from all over the world, to oppose Jesus upon His descent from Heaven (**17:14**, 16:14, 19:19). Notice here John’s persistent usage of the term “Lamb” when speaking of Jesus (5:6-13, 6:1&16, 7:9-17, 12:11, 13:8, 14:1-4, 15:3, **17:14**, 19:7-9, 21:14-23, 22:1-3). Here he also mentions the church that is with Him, for by this point in the story, namely the war against Jesus (19:14-19), all the people of God from all time will be with Him in the air. What a formidable army! The Lord of Lords with His redeemed and empowered saints! And the angels! Oh how “I want to be in that number.”

The angel returns to a description of the harlot and her relationship to the beast (**17:15-16**). The woman is, for a long time, spiritual head of the planet, all its tongues and divisions. But at the end, as antichrist desires all men to worship him alone, all other religions are destroyed and re-programmed for a more direct channel to himself.

Next, we see all of the Empire, totally under the grasp of Satan and his man, turning on Babylon, the former glory of the nations, and burning her (**17:16-17**). All of the next chapter (18) is a description of this tragedy. It is God filling the hearts of these evil men so that they desire to do His will.

Now we go to a study of the fall and funeral of the “great city”, followed immediately by the return of Jesus.

**r. Close-Up**

**The fall of Babylon (18:1-19:10)**

What begins in **18:1** is a separate vision from chapter 17, but not a separate subject. Another angel is used. In this chapter there is no imagery, only facts. The fact of Babylon's fall, the fact of those who mourn her. The announcement is made by an angel of great authority. May I suggest that this could be the great archangel spoken of by the apostle Paul in I Thessalonians 4:16? In connection with Paul's description of His coming, a full account of which immediately follows in 19:11-16, there is the "voice of the archangel." The message of that Voice only lasts through verse 3. Then another voice reminds people of God *of all generations* to stay clear of Babylon. Now that same destruction, seemingly already past in verses 1-3, is back to the future in most of the rest of the chapter.

In **18:2** the angel says what we heard in 14:8 and 16:19. Consider the echoing of the phrase "is fallen." The original, in Isaiah 21:9, is the same. Babylon *is fallen, is fallen*. Could it be that this double announcement is to lead us to believe that there are *two* Babylons? There was that original city, now in ruins, yet never destroyed as God had promised, with violent suddenness. Then there is Babylon on the Tiber, according to chapter 17. Rome, and the kingdom centered there. Let me remind you of the description in chapter 17 that leads us here:

1. It is a woman. (17:3)
2. On her forehead is written "Babylon the great..." (17:5)
3. She is seated on seven hills. (17:9)
4. She is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth. (17:18)

The woman is Babylon. Babylon is Rome. Babylon is to fall.

Are they both to fall at this time? Of course Babylon would have to be rebuilt. Was not Saddam working on that?

Or has Rome been so taken over by Islamic culture by this time that she is christened "Babylon" in the last days?

It seems odd to hear in the 90's A.D. a prophecy about a city that was supposed to have been finished centuries before. Here is a mystery indeed for believers to continue to investigate. Wrestle with God until every syllable of every text involved is crystal clear. It is not good enough to have *most* of the mystery resolved. There are answers for every riddle. I believe those who want to know these things will know them increasingly as the Day draws near. Those who prefer their pleasures and the things of this world will never figure it out.

A continuing description of Babylon's destruction, as the chapter progresses, sometimes matches *word for word* the picture painted by Isaiah of the original city in Isaiah 13, 14, and 34. Read them and see for yourself! One significant difference in the angel's words, however, is the addition of demon spirits to the mix. This coming horror is not just a human tragedy. Babylon is Satan's masterpiece. It will now bear Satan's mark. It will be on earth the gathering place of all that is evil, a veritable prison holding the enemy captive until its new home, the Lake of Fire, is prepared to receive him.

Seeing the peaceful city of Rome in our day, a well-known tourist attraction, it is hard to see the evil that the Reformers saw in her, back in the day when they were being forced out of the Roman Church.

**18:3** takes us back to 17:2 and explains to us how the evil centered in Rome/Babylon has infected, as with a deadly virus, all the nations.

**Another voice (18:4).** Back from the future, and into the present again. People of God! Come out of her! As the prophet Isaiah warned (48:20, 51:45, 52:11), and as the apostle Paul echoed, also using Isaiah (II Corinthians 6:17). Notice that Paul's quote from Isaiah is not exact. He is speaking as the Spirit gives him utterance here. He says, Do not even *touch* what is unclean. Distance yourself from this world except where absolutely necessary! It will only make you dirty and cloud your vision of the True.

**18:5** continues the rationale for separation from the evil of this world. The cup of iniquity is full. It is time for judgment. Don't be anywhere near that which God hates so much.

**The request for judgment (18:6-7).** The announcement has already been made. The innocent are being asked to step aside, so that judgment can fall. Though it seems that believers

themselves are being told to do the judging of Babylon, looking at the end of verse 8 lets us know that it is God who does this, and in 17:16 we find His servants for this destruction: the antichrist kingdom itself throws Babylon off and tramples her. Jesus, though He is very near at this point, perhaps has not yet come and rendered direct judgment. He is using forces of nature and forces of war.

Here in verses 6 and 7 we get more insights into who this woman is. Her demeanor is that of a proud queen that cannot be removed from the Throne. She believes she is God's representative on earth and therefore deserves every luxury and every privilege. How mistaken she is. God's true representatives on earth are like Jesus, and the mind that is in them inevitably leads them to wash disciples' feet and die on a cross. Let us beware the evil of our heart that wants to think in terms of *deserving* blessings. Let us always approach the Throne of Mercy as humble subjects of the King, knowing we are friends of the Court, but knowing also how undeserving is that friendship.

Note the quickness of the judgment to come **(18:8)**: In 8, "...her plagues will come in *one day*." In 10, "...in *one hour* your judgment has come." In 17, "...in *one hour* such great riches came to nothing." In 19, "...in *one hour* she is made desolate." Sounds very much like the instant end of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or even much worse. One day Babylon flourishes. *The next she is gone*. How quickly the kingdoms of men can fall. This of course echoes the Old Testament prophecy.

Then begins the pitiful lament, the funeral song by the great men of earth for the great city of Babylon **(18:9)**. These world leaders obviously have no part in her destruction, as this is a work of the ten horns Empire. Why would world powers mourn Babylon's fall if they all were responsible for it? Better to think in terms of the "United States of the Mediterranean", a confederation of ten states located roughly in the territory once called the Roman Empire. The worldwide connection to the beast and the harlot becomes obvious here. When she is gone, their own status is ruined. She was the supplier as well as the recipient of their goods, the supreme trading city or system of earth. The cosmos, the web of evil that controlled all.

Before we continue, we must take a look at this New Testament Babylon, the city of *Rome, today*. She does not seem to be all that powerful now. Here at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in fact, where is there anywhere, except America, a metropolis that fits the words of Revelation 18, soon to follow in our reading? We are looking for an unequalled center of trade **(18:11-20)**, a center of music, commerce, religion, military might **(18:21-24)**. One can imagine why some have thought that Babylon is really America today! Elements of Babylon are certainly in this country. But we are looking for a *city* that meets the description. New York? Washington? Los Angeles?

If we look at our world and do not see what the Bible says, let us be careful not to invent something for God. The Bible still mentions only one candidate, in two forms, for this final city. The city must be *Babylon* or that which became Babylon in the eyes of the Revelator of this book, namely the city of Rome. If neither of those candidates match up today (Rome or a re-built Babylon), we need to give them time to blossom. God's Word cannot be inaccurate. I believe that either one or both of those cities will ultimately rise to fulfill their place in history. The original Babylon did not fall as predicted; therefore its fall is in the future still. The spirit of Babylon has been passed on through the centuries from Medo-Persia to Greece to pagan Rome to Papal Rome. Give it time to surface again.

I ask you, can Rome rise again? When the Pope is able to convince all religions to come together, as he has been in the process of doing for decades, Rome can rise. When the Pope can persuade the people of Jerusalem that he indeed is the one who can successfully solve the Middle east conflict through internationalizing Jerusalem, Rome can rise. When the nations of earth look for a return to the glory years, and financial prosperity, in a United States of Europe, Rome can rise. It was at the *treaty of Rome*, in 1957, that Europe began a rise to modern power. That cannot be a coincidence.

A curious insight is related in **18:10-11**: The kings of the earth all seem to be near while Babylon is being destroyed, but they deliberately "stand at a distance." Is this because the sixth-bowl demons (16:14) have gathered these kings into one place for the coming battle against God Almighty? It would seem so. This is, after all, the last of the last days. Antichrist is furiously releasing every evil force at his command and has just "dropped the bomb" on Babylon. In verse 15 the earth's merchants, many of them on hand to trade, also have to step back.

"**Alas**", an expression of sorrowful shock, is used only in this chapter of the New Testament. Even sin-minded plague-devastated humans will be shocked when they see Babylon fall.

A catalog of the merchandise about to be lost to the world system (**18:12-14**). Strange creatures, these humans. The sun has been darkened. Millions of people are dead all over the earth. Nature and human nature are at their worst, and yet these greedy souls are concerned more about the money they will lose on things, than that the world is falling apart. Come to think of it, that is not far from the description of our own world. The love of money drives the hearts of men in the face of world catastrophes even now.

Here is the list of grieved merchandise:

(1) gold, silver, precious stones, pearls,

(2) fine linen, purple, silk, scarlet,

- (3) types of wood, ivory, bronze, iron, marble,
- (4) cinnamon, incense, fragrant oil, frankincense,
- (5) wine, oil, flour, wheat, fruit,
- (6) cattle, sheep, horses/chariots,
- (7) the bodies and souls of men! (slavery, which never ended),
- (8) “rich and splendid things” covers all else.

This is a list of products to be found in the final capital of the world. How stands that description at this hour? We say Rome must surely rise again. What about now? Is she a major trading city today? Is slavery there, other than the spiritual bondage for which she is famous? The word of God, every word, is pure. When this city exists, it will be obvious.

**18:15** echoes verse 10 but speaks of *merchants* instead of *world leaders*. The same pattern for *naval personnel* is found in **18:17**. **18:16** brings us back to 17:4 and reminds us that indeed, chapters 17 and 18 speak of the same place.

The funeral song neatly divides into three portions. The *kings* of the earth, **18:9-10**, the *merchants* in **18:11-17a**, and the *navy* in **18:17b, 18-19**. Political, financial, and military grief. Babylon is gone. Notice the similarity of their songs: They all start out “Alas, alas that great city...,” and then they add their own personal perspective of the description of that place. Following this it is, “for in one hour...” God has destroyed her, and the city has come to desolate nothingness.

Heaven responds with three categories of worshipers, *rejoicing* in the moment (**18:20-21**)! The holy apostles, the prophets, the angels of Heaven. There is no sorrow. For the *happiness of man* was never the purpose of Heaven. Rather, the *glory of God*! God has gotten glory from this vengeance. Let no voice of sympathy for those “poor humans” be voiced! Mercy is now being expressed in new ways: A merciful God has rid the earth of this cancer that once poisoned all it contacted. Earth is being purified, God is being glorified. So be it!

**The angel’s pronouncement (18:21)**. And is this any different from what the Old Testament writers saw of Babylon? Did they see some *gradual falling away* of the city? Jeremiah 51:8: “Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed.” More to the point, the finality and speed of Babylon’s fall are explicitly demonstrated by the command of Jeremiah to Seraiah the quartermaster (Jeremiah 51:59-64) to take his book of prophecy about Babylon, tie a stone to it, and throw it into the Euphrates River. This was to be the sign that Babylon would fall quickly and not recover from its tragedy.

But wait! Babylon only slowly drifted away from prominence, being for scores of years



after its takeover a coveted jewel of world conquerors. As John wrote these words on Babylon, a strong Jewish community lived there!

Babylon's full fate seems to be yet future as Revelation 18:21 points out again: Here Jeremiah's picture is revived. This time it is not the quartermaster but a master angel who picks up a stone and throws it. The sea is the recipient now (and there is no sea around old Babylon!) but the message is the same: Babylon is to be thrown down finally and never be found again!

Time and nature eventually took ancient Babylon from power. But this was not God's final plan. The spirit ruling old Babylon entered the city and governance of Rome, raising it to prominence among the earth's billions, and thus making her ripe for judgment as though she were indeed Babylon! This will not be a repeat performance, for the original sentence was *never carried out*. This will be the first and last time. Yes, when *all that is Babylon* is scheduled for judgment, that judgment will be swift and sure, "for strong is the Lord God Who judges her (18:8)."

Next comes yet another list, this time of things which shall never be in this city again **(18:22-23)**: all manner of musicians, craftsmen of every sort, light, weddings and all of human life. It is finished.

Perhaps the most fascinating statement of all is saved until the end of the chapter **(18:24)**: The blood of prophets (God's *spokesmen*), saints (all of God's *people*), and all of earth's slain too, is somehow tied to this city of Babylon. Back to Jeremiah 51 for light on this. 51:49: "As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon the slain of *all the earth* shall fall..." God never forgot what Babylon did to His people. That same spirit of Babylon entered Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, Romanism and kept hurting God's people and God's spokesmen. Always the descendants of Nimrod have hated God's men and even caused all the other problems of earth. Everything Babylon has done is now being judged in one fell swoop, one mighty moment of power and destruction and vengeance.

Perhaps it is permissible to think of it this way: When God spoke to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, he was really speaking to Satan, His enemy. And when God spoke to old Babylon about judgment, perhaps it is possible He was speaking to the spirit of that city, personified in Revelation as a Harlot. He knew that evil personage inside the city would regroup and eventually form a Babylon greater and more powerful than the first. That city would then be destroyed as Babylon the first never was.

**The response to Babylon's fall** is continued in chapter 19, where **(19:1-3)** the multitudes of Heaven including the 24 elders and living creatures **(19:4)** we met at the beginning of the story, shed not one tear for the world-corrupting prostitute. The lady who had the reins of the beast for all these centuries is down and out **(19:2)**. Yet her people will never be "extinct" **(19:3)** as we

are reminded again here of the eternity of God's judgment. Now remains only the beast himself, seemingly running wildly out of control, but his day is soon to arrive.

In **19:5**, an angel, we assume, commands worship to the Lord, reminding us that the eternal focus of Heaven and Heaven's would-be citizens is to be the Lord God Himself, not even His justice. **19:6** is the response of the multitude of verse one, to the angel's orders.

**The announcement of the Marriage Supper (19:7-10).** In verse 7 is the book's first mention of a Marriage Supper. No, it did not happen already, somewhere three- and a half - or seven - years ago. No, it was not a *secret* banquet, hidden from "Tribulation saints" because of their lukewarmness. Where did we get these ideas? The banquet is here initially announced, and it looks as though it will take place in the immediate future. But first things first. There will be another less tantalizing supper before it. Just for the record, the actual celebration of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb itself is *nowhere recorded in Scripture*.

Here once more is a demonstration of the indefensibility of a pre-tribulation rapture during which believers are feasting around a table with Jesus while some lower-life tribulation saints bear horrible burdens below. I think it is clear by this time in the story that the *tribulation is past*. Babylon is fallen. Heaven is rejoicing. Now let's celebrate with the church, says the Lord! By the way, that celebration will be on earth! Jesus promised the same to His followers... He said He would not be personally eating and drinking with them again until He did so *in the kingdom*.

Matthew 26:26 ff relates the institution of the memorial supper, to be celebrated for the duration of the church age. What strange things have been done with what could not be simpler to understand: take some bread, take some wine, let them symbolize what I did for you, so you won't forget it! And Jesus lets us know in this original statement that, not only is this a memorial of what He did, but a preview of what is coming. Yes, there is a spiritual wine, a spiritual fellowship, a spiritual table, in this Spirit-filled age of ours.

But I am speaking as I believe Jesus was, of a literal fulfillment of this prophecy. The angel is here summoning all to that *feast*. Jesus the man will actually return and eat and drink *real food*, as he did once before in His resurrected Body. This will be "when the kingdom of God comes," Luke 22:18. Jesus even told a story about a wedding feast (Matthew 22). He implied there that fathers giving banquets for their about-to-be-married sons is the norm. It is not mere allegory that calls us the Bride of Christ. That is how he views us and that is how He will receive us on that day. Our union will be celebrated before the entire world, not in secret!

Notice **(19:8)** that this bride is dressed in fine linen, and that this clothing is said to represent the righteousness of the saints. There will be real clothing but the thing represented is even more important: the fact that Christ has given us of His righteousness and caused us to be righteous like Him. God had promised (Romans 8:29) to conform us to the image of His Son, and

now it is accomplished.

In the next scene **(19:14)** of this drama, this same linen-clothed multitude is sitting atop white horses, prepared to invade earth. As always they have no fear of dirtying their garments, for the Lord God Who is strong to save and to judge will be doing all the work, and cutting a path through the heavens and the horrors of earth, directly to the Holy City and the Place where the Banquet Hall will soon be prepared.

**Why does John fall down to worship (19:9-10)?** The angel who gives directions now calls himself a fellow-servant of John. He, like John, serves the Lord God. He has the testimony of Jesus, and so does John, as John himself witnessed in his letter (I John 5:10). In 22:9 a clearly-defined angel describes himself in the same way to the apostle, just after John –again– tries to worship him! The citizens of that land have so much of the brightness and glory of Jesus in them that, for an un-changed earthling, they must all seem like gods! Within a few years, John himself would wear that glory!

So this angel, who has called him again to write **(19:9)**, thus consistently being the dictator of Christ's message (1:1), stops John's attempts at worship, cold, then gives us a thought worth pondering, worth applying to our own lives lest we fall into a similar problem. *Too often we enter into hero-worship*, or even delude ourselves into thinking there is something intrinsically wonderful about our own person, when God begins to use us and speak to us and through us. Oh we have the message of the Lord flowing through us, the "testimony of Jesus." But remember the angel's word: Worship God! Don't look at me! The message of Jesus that we are proclaiming is the very essence of the prophecy you are hearing at our lips. But, the source of it all is God. Worship Him! In ourselves we do nothing, know nothing. God is all and is in all.

**s. The return of Jesus and defeat of the Beast (11-21, 14:14-20)**

John relates three pictures of the coming of Jesus. We saw two in chapter 14. The picture here is of an invading army, with Jesus at the head of it. He has gathered His troops together, and on the day of battle He is the hands-down favorite. It's all over in a short time. No other passages in Revelation even come near to describing an actual return of Jesus Christ. There is no hint of a secret coming, and no need of one! The Marriage Supper is announced, but not experienced yet. Jesus leaves Heaven accompanied by the saints, and then He comes to earth conquering all who stand in His path. Zechariah sees the same thing. Jesus talks about it. Paul and Peter see it. And, from the beginning of this final book, there have been constant hints about the return of Christ:

1:7, "Behold **He is coming** with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him..."

1:8, "...the Lord...**Who is to come**"

2:25, "Hold fast what you have **till I come.**"

3:11, "Behold **I come** quickly."

11:17, "The One **Who is to come**...You have taken your great power and **reigned**..."

14:14-20, The earth is "**harvested**" and "**reaped**" by "One like the Son of Man."

16:15, "Behold **I am coming** as a thief."

And now it happens. Yes, this is the only time Jesus comes to earth. This is the only time Heaven is opened to release the Living Word. This is the only time the full army of Heaven is seen with Jesus. The book has been leading up to this moment, and now it happens. Nothing anywhere about a secret coming seven years earlier. Nothing.

And is there any question as to the identity of this coming King? The Spirit has framed the entire event in language from *other parts of Revelation*, the *prophets*, the *apostles*. This is Jesus. He is:

- **Faithful and True (19:11)**, as in 3:14, introducing Himself to the Laodiceans.

- **Righteous Judge and Warrior (19:11)**, as in Isaiah 11:4.
- **possessed of eyes as a flame of fire (19:12)**, as in 1:14.
- **crowned with many crowns (19:12)**. When the seventh angel sounded (11:15) it was announced that this world's kingdoms became the Christ's. All of them. Here He is seen wearing the crowns He so richly deserves.
- **said to have His own special Name (19:12)**, unknown to anyone but Himself. Well, in verse 13 His Name is "Word of God", but we know that Name. In verse 16, the Name written on Him is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." But we know that Name too. What is that secret Name? That is for Him to know. His own people have been promised a unique name also, in 2:17.
- **clothed with the blood-dipped Robe (19:13)**. No, that is not His own blood from Calvary. Isaiah 63:2-3 lines up with Revelation 14 and this passage to let us know that Jesus will personally judge sin at His coming and create an unprecedented bloodbath among the nations. He is seen in this robe in anticipation of what He is about to do but also because of what He has been allowing to happen for all time. He is the One who judges sin. He is the control of the universe after all.
- **the Word of God (19:13)**, as from John's own Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh" (John 1:1, 14).
- **united to His church (19:14)**. In Matthew 24:31, the elect are "gathered from the four winds." I Thessalonians 4:14-17 says God will bring with Him "those who sleep in Jesus." And, "The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." And in I Corinthians 15:51-52, "We shall all be changed in a moment...at the last trumpet" (aka the seventh trumpet). I submit to the church members who read this document that there is absolutely no conflict between the verses I have just quoted and the scene John paints of the second coming of the Lord. I submit further that there is *not one reason* to take those former verses out of their normal context and make them apply to *anything but that second coming*.
- **wielding the Sword that strikes the nations (19:15)**. Isaiah 11:4b, "He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked." The Sword is the Word that comes out of His mouth: The Word of God is even *sharper* than a natural sword (Hebrews 4:12).
- **ruling with a rod of iron (19:15)**. In Psalm 2:8, Messiah is told, "Ask of Me [the Father] and I will give You the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession. You shall break them [the nations] with a rod of iron." The male child of Revelation 12:5,

supervising the overcomers of 2:27, is scheduled to control, *absolutely*, the planet.

- **the Treader of the winepress (19:15).** Again, Isaiah 63:3, “I have trodden the winepress alone.” This very scene has been played out in chapter 14, a holocaust of unprecedented proportions. Flesh for birds to eat.
- **King of Kings and Lord of Lords (19:16).** Make no mistake. He is coming to reign, and reign totally, supremely. The kings of earth will learn, as Nebuchadnezzar of old (Daniel 2:47), Who He is as their kingdom is ripped from them and given to Jesus. Only He will be King in that day. For a reference to this grand fact, see Psalms such as 2, 10, and 45.

Now that we know Who He is, and what claim to authority He makes, let us see what He does **(19:17-18)**: We were led to believe that the fourth and fifth bowl judgments did away with the sun for a short period just before the return of Jesus. But here an angel stands in the sun. Perhaps the damage to the sun was temporary. Or perhaps the angel is standing in John’s sky of the first century painting the picture of the supper of flesh.

The strange announcement given to birds is not new to the Scriptures. 700 years earlier God had told Ezekiel to speak to those winged creatures also (39:17 ff): “Assemble yourselves and come... Gather together from all sides to my sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you... on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty...you shall be filled at My table with horses and riders, with mighty men and with all the men of war.” Much of this is word for word like the passage before us.

We have seen the approach of Jesus in verses **11-16**. Now comes anti-Jesus against Him **(19:19)**. The incredible thing about the confrontation of verses **19-21** is that the enemy of our souls believes he really can, with the powers given him by God, defeat God. Here is tremendous pride, of the sort that leads to eternal destruction, *self-esteem* taken to its ultimate. With demonic aid, he will summon the earth’s kings to a war. They will respond. His intention will be to attack Jesus and the entire church as they descend together! He will be utterly crushed. Obviously most copies of the Scriptures, that tell of all this in plain detail, will not be a major factor in the world’s population. The Bible will have been destroyed or ignored for many years. Only the few saints left (see Daniel 12 for a description of the blessed ones at the end) will know and understand what is happening.

So here sits the little horn, thinking he is a big horn, “the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain (Daniel 11).” The nations rage (Psalm 2:1 ff)! The people plot a vain thing! “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed!” What is their thinking? The same as always: “Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us!”

**And Heaven's response?** Psalm 2:4, "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath: 'I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.'"

Then the beast is captured and with the false prophet thrown into the lake of fire **(19:20)**. Or as Daniel says it, "He shall come to his end, and no one will help him (11:45)." There follows in Daniel an unequaled time of trouble, the coming of Jesus, resurrections, judgments, etc. Just like what is about to happen here in Revelation. The prophets agree.

What next? With the two leaders gone, the battle, as it was, *and it wasn't*, is over. It's time now to kill the rest of His enemies in the same way: the sword that proceeds from Jesus' mouth **(19:21)**, His sharp and mighty Word. Now comes that slaughter of millions upon millions gathered to oppose Jesus. Kings, captains, mighty men, horses, horse-riders, free, slaves fighting to be free, small, great. These were the ones who so hated Jesus Christ that when the call from demons came to replace Christ as Lord of the earth once and for all, they responded. They are all now dead. The only sound you can hear is the noisy squawking of preying birds enjoying the feast of a lifetime.

Now we enter into the description of life after Jesus' return.

#### **t. The One Thousand Years (20:1-6)**

**The flow of chronology** has been restored to the Revelation. There is no need for close-ups now or set changes. Events flow one after the other as Mystery Babylon is now gone, Jesus has now come, the antichrist and his spiritual sidekick are swimming in a lake of fire. Now comes an angel from Heaven **(20:1)** to the pit that has featured so significantly in the story. In chapter 9 the angel given the key to the pit seems to be fallen and not in ordinary possession of such things. He is given the name "Destroyer" later in the chapter. We watched as that angel released to the world evil creatures that tormented men. Then we noted (17:8) that there is in our day a man who once lived on the planet, who is waiting to ascend from this same pit in the last days. We read that he will come, deceive the nations, and be destroyed, in that order.

His destruction we have just witnessed (19:20), even as we chronicled his activities as deceiver. Now the pit is wanting another resident. This transfer is accomplished by an angel that seems to have been restored to the office of gate-keeper of the pit. Never again will Satan's forces have free access to earth. Satan himself still lives after the war and needs to be restrained until his services are called for again. The angel merely takes the prisoner and locks him in **(20:2)**. We are not told how spirit beings are so restrained, but we know they are. He is to be secured for 1000 years **(20:3)**, as the man of sin stayed put for over 2000 years. It is his binding coupled to Christ's direct rule that will make the Millennium a time of wonder and joy and restoration. His career resumes for a short time **(20:7)**, but before that comes a description of the first

resurrection and the wonderful rule of our Lord Jesus.

**The First resurrection (20:4-6).** It was Jesus Himself who introduced the idea of two resurrections, in John 5:29. He called them the “resurrection of life” and the “resurrection of damnation.” All shall surely be raised from the dead. There is no choice about this. But some shall rise to die no more, to suffer no more, to be totally disconnected from sin forever. Their description in part is in **(20:4)** and causes thinking believers to tremble.

**John sees Thrones (20:4).** So did Daniel (Daniel 7:27). In that vision the prophet sees that just after the dominion of the little horn is taken away, the kingdom is given to the saints of the Most High. This term *saints* is the one used so often by the apostles of the Lord to refer to true believers in Jesus. To these believers is committed judgment. They shall judge others. That’s what Paul said too, in I Corinthians 6:2-3, reminding us that the time will come when saints judge the world and even angels. We must also remember, though, that we shall stand, all of us, before a judgment seat that Christ oversees (II Corinthians 5:10), a preview of which is in Matthew 25, speaking of “when the Son of man comes in His glory.”

So the saints, the believers, are raised to judge others. But John zeroes in on another group here that reminds us of Paul’s statement in Philippians 1:29: “If we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him.” This group is the martyrs. We may have already seen them back in 7:9, arrayed in white robes. They are described as those who refused to worship the beast whether by image or mark. They had therefore been beheaded.

You say, how widespread is that practice today? Does it exist at all? Yes, it does. Saudi Arabia in particular leans toward this and stoning as its primary methods of doing away with evil-doers. A couple more Muslim countries and one African also use this method, but very scarcely.

Is Islam on its way to ascendancy? Will Islamic rule with its beheadings be the means of many believers going to be with Jesus? Saints and martyrs together reign with Christ. Who among us is following Jesus in this way today, willing to suffer and give our lives away totally? Muslims do it regularly in response to a lie. Are we ready to suffer for the Truth?

**1000 years is now mentioned again (20:4-6).** It is the time of the binding of Satan and the time of the reign of the saints. Let no one call it a figurative number when it is used so often in this chapter. I believe it is the earth’s seventh day, the sabbath rest of a planet that worked its way to judgment. After six long 1000-year periods of man’s rule, we shall see how the planet *ought* to have been governed, in its final day.

There are the unsaved dead still to be dealt with **(20:5-6)**. Theirs is the resurrection of damnation. Their fate is discussed in **20:12**. Meanwhile the Millennium is beginning and will blossom more year after year. This is the time that the prophets saw. Holy and blessed saints rule



with Jesus. They have their new bodies while the rest of the planet continues in their old ones. It is here that a flood of prophecies enters in to let us know exactly what life will be like in that day.

In July of 2001, I was intensely involved in a study of ***“the kingdom of God”***. That kingdom is spiritual, but also physical. That kingdom is in the Old Testament and in the New and now in the Spirit. But our future is a literal kingdom with a literal king from the line of David sitting on a literal Throne in Jerusalem. In the process of studying out our glorious future I was able to piece together a profile of that wonderful time. I include here some appropriate pages from that book, *The Kingdom Handbook...*

*The horrid day of judgment ends, the new day dawns, the Lord of hosts begins His glorious reign, the desert rejoices, the Lord arises, restoration is the work of the coming centuries, there is great deliverance, the past is forgotten. We shall now discuss the elements of this new day.*

### **The 1000 Years.**

*With everyone talking about a “millennium”, you would think that the word is sprinkled all over Holy Writ. In fact you will never find it. The prophets describe the age which we later identify as 1000 years. Jesus ignores such a time frame altogether. Not until Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians is there a hint in the New Testament that something comes between our day and the eternal one. In 15:20-28 is his classic delineation of the resurrections. Christ is resurrected first. Then come Christ’s people. Then, the end, when Jesus delivers the kingdom (what kingdom?) to the Father. The explanation of the kingdom is that time when Jesus shall reign, destroying one enemy after the other, much like David did in His day. David is even associated with this Millennial reign by prophetic greats Jeremiah (30:9) and Ezekiel (34:23-24, 37:24-25). The last enemy to be destroyed is death, and yes, death and dying are part of this final reign (Isaiah 65:20).*

*But it is not until John, the last Bible writer, in one of his last chapters (Revelation 20:1-7), that the number “1000” is attached to the kingdom as a time limit. Putting it all together, we have to go back into the text and realize that there is a special time on earth for the reign of Jesus, and an ensuing time for the reign of the Father, on a new earth! This can get so tricky at times that some researchers have preferred to write off a literal millennium altogether. I feel this is dangerous, and sets a man up to be rebuked by the Lord, for even the smallest aberration from the revealed truth will earn such rebukes.*

*Knowledge of the 1000 years causes us to go back and insert it into passages we had before considered simple, and which were taught in simplicity to give an overall*

*picture of the truth being communicated. Jesus' talk of the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation in John 5, must be understood as separated. This style is in keeping with the Old Testament prophets who saw the first and second coming of Christ as nearly one event, hardly mentioning the long church age between. II Peter 3 says that it is in the "day of the Lord" that the heavens pass away, everything is burned up, and we look for a new heavens and earth. There's 1000 years in that statement. Peter sums it up very neatly. Even Daniel saw that many who "sleep" (bodily) in the dust (souls-spirits are not in the dust!) will awake in that day, some to everlasting life, some to everlasting contempt (12:2). But John puts those resurrections 1000 years apart!*

### **Where?**

*In a classic passage of the return in victory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the very place of His touch-down is recorded. Zechariah in chapter 14 gives in vivid detail the geography of our future. He says that the day of the Lord is coming. He repeats the oft-spoken theme that all nations will be gathered to battle against Jerusalem. There will be another captivity. After horrific plagues spoken of by other prophets, the Lord Himself descends and His feet touch the very Mt. of Olives where he had ascended so long before. The impact of that landing will split the mount in two, allowing a place for those who need to, to flee. Then there are the signs in the heavens, the river of life is opened, the Lord becomes King over all the earth. But from Jerusalem. At that time, adds Jeremiah (3:17) Jerusalem shall be called "The Throne of the Lord." All the nations shall be gathered to it! They will no longer walk after the stubbornness of their evil heart. The Gentiles will be gathered to the capital city of the earth, the new Jerusalem.*

..

*The New Jerusalem is the logical outcome of the New Covenant, the expanded Israel which takes in whosoever will, Jew and Gentile alike. She is the reigning capital of the New Earth but will reign over the kingdoms of the world that have real names that we recognize.*

*The host of Scriptures that point out Jerusalem as the center of this world's future begins with the Psalms (2:6). Yet have I set My King on My holy hill of Zion. The "hill" theme is consistent throughout. See Psalm 24:3 and Revelation 21:12 (on the new earth). The gates of Psalm 24:3 are also found in Revelation 21:12. Psalm 48 mentions the City of our God, and the holy mountain thereof. Psalm 99:9 invites us to worship at His Holy Hill. So Psalm 132:13-14. Then comes Isaiah talking about a "mountain" that shall be established on top of the mountains, to which all nations shall flow. See Isaiah 25:6, 26:1, 35:10, 40:1, 52:1, and 66:12-13.*

*Then there is Ezekiel who also mentions a holy mountain (20:40). And in 40:2 he himself is taken to a very high mountain, to see the structure of a city and a special house inside of it. In 43 he sees the eastern gate, the inner court, the place of God's Throne "where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever." Now Revelation 21:3, speaking of the new heavens and the new earth, likewise talks of the "tabernacle" or dwelling-place, of God being with man. I believe the same basic city will be visible at both times. I believe Ezekiel's vision refers to the Millennium because of his mention of a temple, absent in the New Earth's City, and his insistence on the literal David being present to reign under Christ.*

*Ezekiel is given a vision of the rest of the holy land of those days, roughly the size of David's old kingdom, with Jerusalem being 10-12 miles in every direction, according to Revelation. See Ezekiel 47-48.*

*The Revelation City, like Ezekiel's, has high walls, three gates on each side (Ezekiel 40:6 ff, Revelation 21:12) with tribal names (Ezekiel 48:30, Revelation 21:12). There are healing waters and trees. One can imagine the need for the healing of the nations after the pollution of what seems to be a nuclear war on the planet (Ezekiel 47:1-12, Revelation 22:1-2).*

*Ezekiel tells us further that the whole area surrounding the mountaintop is holy. No foreigners, uncircumcised, allowed in, Revelation 21:27. There is a special place for the "prince" and the Lord, Ezekiel 44:1-3, 45:6-8. And for priests, 45:1-5.*

*Is "New Jerusalem" identifiable by both John and Ezekiel? Ezekiel's City has a temple, but not John's. One has day and night, not the other. I believe Jerusalem which is above is the same city throughout, with variations that fit the situation. Ezekiel saw her in her Millennial Phase. John saw her in her New Earth Phase. Right now she is in her Heavenly preparation Phase. But the streets of gold are still there, along with the tree of life, the water of life, and whatever else is needed to make a Heavenly city. Both John and Ezekiel saw these features. What a wonderful future is ours!*

### **Who is There?**

*It may be a shock to some to realize that there are several categories of persons who will be present on that great day of the Lord.*

### **First and foremost will be Jesus Himself.**

*Yes, the Father is always present when Jesus is here, but these 1000 years will be especially the Son's, per I Corinthians 15. Only at the end of this kingdom does the Son*

*somehow give all to the Father. This is a mystery somewhat beyond us now, but we'll have 1000 years to learn how it will happen.*

**Jesus will be accompanied by the angels.**

*So it says in every passage talking of His coming, Matthew 13:40,41, 24:31, 25:31, I Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 19:17, 20:1.*

**The holy people.**

*They are not only on the earth, but on the hill, in the City. Psalm 24: 3-6 takes on a new light as we see a literal hill before us, allowed to be ascended by only a literal people with clean hands and a pure heart, the generation of those who seek His face. It brings us to Revelation 21:27, talking of the same city in a new world, telling us that nothing that defiles will ever enter that place, only those who are in the Lamb's Book of Life. These are people that (22:14) do his commandments, and therefore have right to the tree of life, and to enter at will into the City.*

*Daniel is told (12:12) that a blessed group of people will "wait and come to the 1335 days." The end of the tribulation period. These are the ones who make it all the way. They are given special honor for special endurance. Who among us is worthy of this position, we who must have our comforts and our pleasures and our distractions?*

**Then there are the 144,000.**

*A Jewish remnant. I start the tracing of this group in Isaiah 4:2. In that day the Branch (Jesus) shall be beautiful, the fruit of the earth excellent for those of Israel who have escaped. 1:9 talks about how the Lord in His mercy left us a very small remnant. If not, annihilation like Sodom. Isn't that what Jesus said, Except those days be shortened...but for the elect's sake, they shall be shortened. Is the Jewish remnant in mind here? There they are again in 10:20-23: The remnant of Israel will never again depend on him who defeated them, but will depend on the Lord. Saved Jews. At the end of all things. The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob. For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them will return...An escaping remnant is likewise mentioned in 37:32 and 66:19. In that last passage the escapees are sent out to the nations to declare His glory to the Gentiles! They shall actually bring people physically to the City of God in that day! A rescued remnant used to preach for Messiah during the reign.*

*And don't leave out Ezekiel! (6:8-10) Yet I will leave a remnant, so that you may have some who escape the sword among the nations, when you are scattered through the countries. Those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are*

*carried captive...*

### **What about Old Testament saints?**

*Are O.T. folks a part of this first resurrection and this glorious reign in the City? Of course. Theirs was the first call, and those men who grasped and believed the promises of God are the original elect to whom the kingdom was given. They were not given the Spirit in the measure given to His church, but the promises are theirs. Ezekiel 37:12-14 spells this out: In explanation of the rising of the dry bones, God says, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land.*

*Get ready for it! This is going to be a very Jewish kingdom! Not only will Abraham and Jacob and Moses and Joseph and David be there, but Jesus promised that His own Jewish apostles will sit on twelve thrones judging the kingdom! Paul says that Old Testament saints did not receive the promise (Hebrews 11:39, 40) in their day, but only because God was waiting on the rest of us to come in! Don't rule out the Jew. It is His kingdom first, then yours. Nevertheless properly grafted Gentiles will be fully operational in that wonderful land of Immanuel. There the King and the Queen rule. The Queen, His bride, is you, in Christ. Notice how the last (Gentiles) become first in receiving the work of the Spirit in its fullness in this church age, while the first (the Jews) will not receive that until they are resurrected.*

### **There's life outside the city, too.**

*There are kings and their kingdoms, for the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. They will somehow bring glory to the City. This reality demands a closer look and a discernment, to avoid blurring the two entities.*

*We begin with Daniel who in chapter 2 explains the king's dream in terms of the nations to follow him, and even their end-time disposition. In 34-35, Nebuchadnezzar is said to have seen a stone cut without hands striking the image of the vision on its feet, representing end time nations. At this time, all the elements of the statue disintegrate. The stone? It becomes a great mountain and fills the world. For at the end of history, a bloody end mind you, the God of Heaven sets up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed (2:44) It shall break in pieces and consume all these nations. In 7:11-12, Daniel's angel tells us that after the final kingdom is destroyed (we believe this to be revived Rome ruled by the man of sin) the other kingdoms (the rest of the world, I take it), though their dominion is taken away, their lives are prolonged. Gentile nations are allowed to enter, sans*

*leadership, into the Millennium.*

*The Father tells the Son (Psalm 2: 6-9) to ask Him, and He will give Him the nations for His inheritance, and the ends of the earth for His possession. He is in fact to rule these nations with a rod of iron. That's why nations of today are warned (2:10-12) to get on God's good side. Especially should nations be a friend to Israel. Though Israel will be punished by God through Gentile nations who are so disposed to hate her anyway, those nations will in turn be punished for touching her. Since just about every nation hates Israel in our day, the conflagration at the end will be nearly universal.*

*The mention of the rod of iron lets us know that the Gentile nations, though subservient to Christ, and yes, without Satan's temptations, as he will be bound for the duration, are still not heart-followers of Jesus. Many of these citizens, we know not how many, yet they are as the sand of the sea, will, when once given the Satanic nod at the end of the 1000 years, turn against Christ and be damned forever.*

*Isaiah has interesting insights about the Gentiles of this day. (56:6-8). The sons (for they shall give birth) of the foreigner (Gentile nation) who joins himself to the Lord, of his own will, will be allowed to come to the mountain where Jesus and the holy people reside. God comments that not only the "outcasts of Israel" but others will be gathered to Him in that day (Isaiah 2).*

*The difference in people groups is brought out again in Isaiah 61:5. It is indicated that the foreigner will be servant to the people of God, who will be a special priesthood. The saved people will eat the riches of the Gentiles. Honor will be given to God's people. That is why we must never seek it now.*

*The classic passage in Isaiah 2 is not for us, but for those special Gentiles allowed to live at this time. All nations will flow to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. Many will come and say, let us go up to the house of the Lord. He will teach us. We will walk in His paths. He shall then judge between the nations, and rebuke many people. Notice it is many, not all. The invitation to come will be ignored even still by some, but these folks will not be in any way a threat to the security of the age. Jesus will rebuke them, and they will straighten up or else! All power will be in Jerusalem. Isaiah later adds in 26:9-14 that when God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Oh yes, there were many other masters in centuries past, even trying to rule in the name of Jesus, but they and their memory are perished.*

*Out of Jerusalem will be sent those who will go to all the Gentiles and attempt to bring them to the City, Isaiah 66:20. Those who come will fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 14:16-17, where it says that all who are left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall*

*go up from year to year to worship the King. And if they do not go up, there will be no rain on their land! Some, it seems, hold out to the end. The Gog-Magog confederation of Ezekiel is perhaps the “northern army” of Joel 2:20. It is this slaughtered army that is being buried for seven months. The remnant is pushed back to a barren and desolate land (as Siberia, for example). Here the hatred for Jesus Christ, it seems, is allowed to fester, and in the very last of days, at the end of the 1000 years, this nation will once more be instrumental in an assault against God’s priorities (Revelation 20).*

*Individual nations are outlined in Isaiah 19:18-25, and 27:13. Assyria, that we see as extinct today, will be in most favored status in that day, along with Egypt, “My people”, though according to Joel 3:19, Egypt will at first be a desolation, along with most of the world. Egypt is differentiated of course in this passage from Israel, “My inheritance.”*

*These nations will be willingly, for the most part, subservient to the kingdom people. Psalm 47:3 and 8 foresee a time when God will subdue the peoples under “us”, sitting on His holy Throne, reigning over the nations. Psalm 48 is a similar picture of the elevated Jerusalem having become the joy, and no longer the burden, of the whole earth, because it is the city of the Great King. God is in her palaces now. Terrified kings are seen passing by and marveling! So in Psalm 72:11, and in the oft-quoted Psalm 110, where the Lord says to the Lord (Jesus) to rule in the midst of His enemies! These are the conquered Gentile nations, whose leaders have already been destroyed. Something like post-war Germany without Hitler. Terrified, conforming. For, vs. 5-6, He shall judge among the nations, and execute the heads of many countries.*

*Though conquered and serving, Zechariah puts the best face on it when he says in 2:10 and 11 that He is coming to dwell in our midst, and many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day. They shall become My people.*

*Also, could it be, there are sorcerers, sexually immoral, murderers, the crop of evil that Satan will use at the end of 1000 years to lead a rebellion against that City, after he goes on a whirlwind campaign around the earth to deceive the nations again! All this in Revelation 20:7-10. (Here dies the theory that says all unbelievers are dead until the second resurrection, and that all the saints are with Christ in Heaven for that 1000 years.)*

### **Lifestyle:**

*What will life on earth be like during the Millennium? Let’s allow several men to give us their vision of things, to add to the picture we have already drawn above.*

***Solomon** (Psalm 72:2ff) tells us of a time of universal righteousness. Justice for the poor. Peace. No oppression. The needy will be delivered by crying out.*

**Isaiah** (2:3) describes a constant flow of people to Jerusalem, all wanting to know the ways of the Lord. No more war. Agriculture will flourish. The house of the Lord the centerpiece of the world. (11:6ff) Rule by the rod. The wicked killed. Animals all get along. Children safe. The earth full of the knowledge of the Lord. (12:12ff) a place of constant praise. (27:6) fruit everywhere, supplied by Israel. (35:4ff) All blind see, all deaf hear, all lame leap, all dumb speak. The Highway of Holiness opened. Everlasting joy for the ransomed of the Lord. No sorrow, not even sighing. (54:13) All children taught by the Lord. They shall have great peace. (55) Nature in harmony. No briers. (56:7) Burnt offerings restored. God's house a house of prayer for all nations. (60:5ff) The abundance of the sea will be ours, and the wealth of the Gentiles. People come by air and water to bring gifts to God. Thus Jerusalem's gates open day and night. Nations that refuse this honor to the Lord shall perish! Yet no violence in the land, for matters will be dealt with immediately, quickly. The sun not our light now? A little one shall become a thousand, a new nation. Birth and death shall continue. (62:2) You will be considered "married" not forsaken (a bride adorned for her husband), (66:23ff) weekly and monthly worship, but able also to see a ghastly reminder of what sin will do.

**Jeremiah** (31:5ff) Israel to be rebuilt, a people of the dance, a people of vines. Abundance. Some of the measurements of that City are mentioned.

**Ezekiel** (28:25ff) Build houses, plant vineyards, be secure. (34:25 ff) Animals tamed, people live in safety. Trees abundant. No longer a prey to the nations. A garden of renown to be there. (36:30ff) No famine. You will loathe yourselves as you remember your evil ways. The ruins shall be rebuilt. I will do it, you will pray to me about it. (39:12) First seven months, burial of Gog a type of employment. (40:38-43) a description of the new city and new temple, and sacrifices there. (43:13-27) the new altar (44:10-31) The new priesthood, as Revelation 20:6 mentions that those of the first resurrection will be priests to God! (46:1ff) the Sabbath and the new Moon will be observed, with the other feast days.

**Joel** (2:26ff) never shame again to the people of God. (3) No aliens pass through Jerusalem again. Much wine, milk, water.

**Amos** (9:14) Waste cities rebuilt and inhabited. Vineyards, gardens. Never pulled up again.

**Obadiah** (17) Deliverance and holiness.

**Micah** (2:12ff) So many sheep that they will make a loud noise. Led by the Lord and their King. (5) He is great to the ends of the earth. He feeds His flock.

**Zephaniah** (3:19-20) The lame saved and those driven out, appointed to fame and



praise.

**Zechariah** (6:12) *Messiah shall build the temple. He shall rule on His Throne and be a priest also. Those far away shall likewise build the temple. (8:4ff) Old and young sit in streets of Jerusalem, very old. The vine and the ground shall prosper. Fasts to be kept at certain times. Inhabitants of one city shall go to another and say, let's go to pray and seek the Lord! Many strong nations shall come to seek the Lord in Jerusalem! Ten Gentiles of ten nations will grab a Jew and say, let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. (12:10ff) at the beginning, great mourning as Jews realize who they have rejected. (13:1 ff) Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Prophets not accepted. No need to prophesy now that the Lord is here! (14:8ff) living waters flow from Jerusalem. The Lord is King over all the earth. Specific geographical note. Nations that came against Israel, remainders shall worship the Lord in person from year to year. No go, no rain! Holiness to the Lord will be the universal theme.*

### **The Throne(s).**

*The center of the kingdom of God has always been the Throne. Psalm 45: 6, Your Throne O God (says the Father to the King, Messiah) is forever and ever, a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom.*

*Isaiah says that the government (of this whole world) will be upon the shoulders of the Son Who is the Father. Of the increase of that government and of peace there will be no end upon the Throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it from that time forward even forever.(9:6-7) So the eternal (forward and backward) Throne comes to earth, meshing with the Throne of David, and takes its forward thrust into eternity from there.*

*In Ezekiel 43:7, The Lord says to Ezekiel that the Millennial temple foreseen by the prophet is "the place of My Throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of Israel forever."*

*Daniel 7:9 makes mention of thrones, showing us the uniqueness of the reign of Christ as opposed to the reign of the Father to follow. Perhaps included here is the idea of the "prince", David, not to mention the twelve thrones of the apostles. A lot of reigning going on in the New City, but no question as to who is in charge, like today!*

*Zechariah 6:13 mentions the Throne of "the Branch," Zechariah's code name for Jesus.*

*Hebrews 8:1 gives us the present situation of the Throne in Heaven, with the Son at the right hand of the Father. And in Revelation 3:21 Jesus is sitting down with the Father in*

*His Throne, as we are to sit with the Son in His Throne. Jesus' Throne is the Throne of David, that covers all things human. Jesus sits on that Throne, heir apparent of all humanity. But He also sits in the Father's Throne, for He is God and over all things. Revelation 7:15, 8:5, 19:4, 20:11, 21:5-6, 22:1 all refer to the Throne. From chapter 4 of Revelation, The Lamb and the Throne are inseparable. The rule of God through Christ with us is thus well established.*

#### **u. The Millennium ends (20:7-10)**

Such is a brief look at God's special day, the Millennium. Now this wonderful time ends, and there is a new beginning. Before we move on in chapter 20 it is important to note that, with all of the activities encountered so far, *there is no mention of a new heaven and new earth*. Peter seems to say that they will come immediately after Jesus comes (II Peter 3:10-13). Instead, the prophetic Scriptures I have shown point to a renewed/restored "old earth" and "old Jerusalem."

The conflict is also pointed out in Isaiah who also seems to place the totally new creation right next to the coming of Jesus. We submit to you, because John does via angelic visitation, that this totally new heaven and earth will not come until the planet has had its full seven days, the seventh one being the 1000 years of rest we call the Millennium. As we approach and read verse 11 in this chapter, authorization for all of this will be clear.

The restrainer does his work for 1000 years **(20:7-8)**. The earth takes its rest. Joy abounds. Jesus rules. A perfect government. Could anyone not love a world governed by Jesus? Yes. Many. As many cringe at the idea now. And when Satan is released from his pit prison, he immediately seeks out these malcontents.

Notice that there are still nations in the earth. They all belong to Jesus, but they are separate entities still, perhaps all having transferred over to the one pure language spoken of in Zephaniah 3:9. Satan seems to have a remnant of his own, though, in each nation. He deceives them, as is his wont. See his work in 12:9 as he deceived the entire world. Truths are once more twisted into his way of thinking and bitter resentful people who dared disobey Jesus during His reign and therefore suffered His rebuke, are ready for a new leader.

Nations mentioned by name are Gog and Magog, the focal points of Ezekiel's prophecy (38-39) of end time matters.

Is there repetition here? Is Ezekiel talking about a post-millennial war? Some of the phrases seem to fit. But no, the prophecy must be at the coming of Christ, for it is connected to the great earthquake (38:19), a "supper of flesh" (39:17), a time of setting up of God's glory among the nations (39:21), after the captives of Jacob are brought back and mercy is shown to all Israel (39:25). These familiar images have long since passed by our present vision.

I believe Gog was formerly a mighty leader of a far northern nation (in relation to Israel). He must arrive on our own horizon if we are to be assuredly in the last days. He descends from his place for an all-out assault on Jesus and whatever Jesus wants. Is he "the king of the north" of Daniel 11, the one whose stirrings bother the man of sin?

It is quite possible that he is defeated at the hands of Jesus Himself in Israel. He is buried there and for seven months all the remains left by those birds will be buried with him (Ezekiel 39:12). But his name, as well as the land of Magog, his own land, lives on for the 1000 years. His people are humiliated and many of them carry the resentment throughout the Millennium. It is a most natural place for Satan to raise an army. Josephus, quoted earlier, often – but not always – a reliable source of history, comments on the Genesis 10:2 mention of Magog as the founder of the Scythian nation.... (*Antiquities i, vi, 1*)

*So, Gog and Magog at the beginning of the 1000 years are, perhaps, a man and his nation. By the end, they are perhaps one name for the same land, in the farthest northern parts of inhabitable earth. This nation isolates itself from the mainstream of the earth, especially from the Holy City, but now they are roused to action, a mighty uncountable assemblage of earth's final rebels.*

They descend again **(20:9)**. Southward, coming at the Holy Land—and it truly is holy at

this time, not a mere tourist attraction for the religious-minded— coming, I say, from different directions until they form a huge ring around the city of Jerusalem, called here with affection “the beloved city”, now situated high atop a mountain, “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth (Psalm 48:2).”

As 1000 years before with antichrist’s pitiful attempt at attacking the descending Christ, Satan is not able to fire a shot before the wrathful fire of God falls on the whole company and devours them. Their purpose was to supplant. God’s was to expose the last vestiges of evil. Now the earth is purged. Satan himself is this time not only arrested and imprisoned but consigned to his final home of fire, accompanying beast and false prophet. He and they and all who have followed them shall be tormented day and night forever and ever (14:10).

#### **v. The White Throne Judgment (20:11-15)**

**(20:11)** Now it is quitting time for sure. 7000 years of earth history and now it is time for a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Peter 3:7). Peter had seen this new earth as had Isaiah (in 65:17, 66:22). In both Peter and Isaiah there is an understanding that does not include a 1000-year wait, just as in Daniel we do not see any time between Antiochus’ former and latter career, and as in other passages (such as Isaiah 9:6) where the first and second coming of Jesus

are seen as one event. With John we have the fullness of the revelation, and we rejoice in it.

The first earth will be gradually restored, made new, after its cataclysmic changes associated with the tribulation and wrath of God. At the beginning of the Millennium, it will be slowly rejuvenated by the diligent work of King Jesus and His appointed governors. Then, at the end, according to 20:11, the earth and heavens as we know it will “flee away”. No more detail than this is given. They are just gone!

But a few things remain of the old creation, like the people of God, who are whisked away to glory to await the new creation. It will be seen in chapters 21 and 22 that this new world looks a lot like the old, yet it is clearly different in places too. This compares to our own resurrection and change. The earth will be given a new body.

Also still on hand are the people of the Devil, now ready to be judged. A Great White Throne appears in John’s vision. As the earth vanishes away, the judgment scene, somewhere in God’s creation, takes place. Everyone who ever lived for 7000 years outside the elect of God, now is raised from the dead, and given a resurrection body with which to stand before God. Books are opened: the records of all the details of their lives have been on file all these centuries and millennia **(20:12-13)**. Heavenly files do not erode.

One book is called by name, *The Book of Life*. We have encountered this Book before: in 3:5, overcomers will not have their name blotted out of this Book. So, those who do not overcome but are in fact overcome themselves by evil, *will* have their names blotted out. 13:8 says that if a man’s name is not written in the *Book of Life of the Lamb*, he naturally worships the beast. It is within his old nature to worship something or someone. But his worship of the wrong Someone shows his name is not written there. Likewise 17:8, those who marvel at the beast and are intrigued at all by him, simply are not God’s.

What is God then saying about the Book? That those who love Jesus and do not love the world are in it. Those who do not, are not. If their name is not there, they are cast into the Lake of Fire with those that they followed (20:15). But, to make the record official and clear to all, other books are opened. Is the Holy Bible laid out for all to see? Perhaps there are the books of the works of men? Men who reject the work that Christ did for them and wanted to do in them must be judged by their own works, which the Bible elsewhere refers to as “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). “By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,” said the apostle (Galatians 2:16). The final outcome of trying to be justified in this way is, according to Jesus, the resurrection of damnation. The resurrection of life is past. Too late, sinners, too late. You are called forth to be publicly exposed before men. Damned for eternity.

Yes, the earth has fled **(20:11)**. And before its passing there was removed, for judgment, evil men. Not only the men, but the place of the dead and the spirit of death itself are now before

us, needing a place to go. Death and the grave are the twin enemies defeated by Jesus when He took his own journey to that shadowy place. I read not of any hellish torment of Jesus in the grave, only that He died and preached to spirits there during His death experience. The specifics of His three days in Hades are kept from us. The point here is His victory over those former masters of humanity. By showing us His conquest, He let us know that Death has lost its sting in our own lives, and the grave has lost its victory (I Corinthians 15:55, Hosea 13:14).

In the very first chapter of Revelation, we meet Jesus telling us that He has the keys to the unseen realm of death (1:18). At the fourth seal, in chapter 6, Death is being personified and placed on a horse, accompanied by Hades. Not until this 20th chapter do we meet the pair again, though their work has been evident not only through the Book but through all of history. Now he who defeated them legally, and has the keys to control them, casts them forever into the Lake of Fire, called here the “second death **(20:14)**.” Those who have been born only once, not born again, are here reminded that they must die twice. First comes the grave, and following the judgment comes this lake of fire, where lives Death itself.

**w. The new heaven and the new earth (21:1-22:5)**

The final major subject of God's message to John is a totally new heaven and earth. By "heaven" we understand John to mean all of the creation minus our planet, not the realm of God's residence. A study of *heaven* in Scripture would yield a mixed understanding. A great portion of the time it is used to describe something material, but since it is a word that points men away from earth it is also quite often *the abode of God*. Here we believe the reference is to the same expanse as is mentioned in Genesis 1:1 at the original creation. Before we focus as John does on each piece of that wonderful *new* creation, I want to point out more of that to which I have alluded earlier, regarding the seeming chronological conflict raised by Isaiah and Peter as compared to John.

First let's be certain that we agree that by this time in the narrative, chapter 21, Jesus has come. The tribulation has totally ended. The saints have been given rule over the planet, for 1000 years. Evil ones have met their fate. Death is finished, and the lake of fire remains a constant reminder of God's wrath, God's justice. No place is now found for the old earth, from which have escaped only its billions of people. These things we know. The first heaven and the first earth are gone (20:11). Celestial Jerusalem is at this moment about to descend, having just been populated by the citizens of old, but totally glorified, Jerusalem.

If that is the setting of Revelation 21:1, what is the meaning of the prophet in Isaiah 65:17, where he also mentions a "new heaven and new earth"? For, just after his announcement of this he talks of *death* still being on the planet: "...the child shall die one hundred years old." (65:20) But is not death now banished from the realm? Yes! John insists in **21:4**, "...there shall be *no more death...*"

Could it be that there is a clean break in thought between Isaiah's verse 17 and verse 18? Thus, his first comment could be just a general statement of the future. His further comments could be backtracking into the Millennial days. We believe that the man Isaiah, as all the prophets, had trouble understanding his own words, and only spoke as the Spirit gave utterance (I Peter 1:10-12).

A similar issue arises with the words of Peter. Does he agree with John's chronology? In II Peter 3:6, he informs us that the "first earth", the creation of Genesis 1, perished through a flood. "Perished" here does not indicate annihilation, but rather surface destruction, including the taking away of most life forms. I Peter 3:7 goes on to say that our present earth is headed for a similar fate, that is, not annihilation, but destruction of the surface, this time by fire.

It is interesting to me that in I Peter 3:8, Peter injects the idea of *a thousand years*, admittedly in a different context than John's Millennium, but perhaps indicative of the Spirit's hint that the Millennial Day of the Lord is indeed to be placed between the destruction by fire

and the new earth he mentions in verse 13. Since one day is with the Lord as *a thousand years*, this day could be placed there in God's thinking without affecting the thinking of the prophets or apostles when He is giving them revelation about other end things.

I Peter 3:10 graphically describes the burning process, the melting down of earth's actual elements, so that, as John would later say (Revelation 6:14), the mountains and islands - but not yet the planet - "...will be moved out of their place." Then comes his Isaiah-like statement that there is immediately a new earth "in which righteousness dwells."

The Millennium will be a time when righteousness will dwell safely and reign. But we must say, to stay in agreement with John's final vision, that this newness is the newness of a restored earth, not yet a re-created one. Or, Peter can be speaking the truth without realizing the full extent of his words, as the prophets were wont to do. That is, verse 13 can be taken as the actual new heaven and earth. We do look for this planet to be replaced one day, but one day far in our future.

Let us go now to the text **(21:1-22:5)**: Please understand that the whole discussion of the coming city of God in what we think of as "eternity" is a total of 32 verses! Most of what we know about the future is *Millennial* in nature and contained in the prophets. The rest of Revelation concerns the trouble *before* those 1000 years. 32 verses about eternity because eternity is so far off! But let us enjoy what we do know.

**There is no more sea (21:1)**. The new earth will not be referred to as the "blue planet" any longer. There is water available, but not in these large concentrations.

**Descent of the City (21:2)**. The saints have once more been *raptured* to heaven as the earth disappears from under them (20:11)! They see the city that has been for so long prepared for them, the *New Jerusalem*. Oh they have lived in a spectacular domain for 1000 years, described in detail by the prophet Ezekiel from chapter 40 on. I know of nothing else Ezekiel could be describing but the Millennial Day. But now they see their eternal permanent home, and soon after they arrive, they are transported with that entire City, to the newly-created planet.

John tells us that this city is like a bride. 1000 years earlier, there had been an announcement of a Marriage Supper. The Lamb was to take His Bride. And He did. And what a wonderful marriage they have had as co-regents of the *old* earth! But there is a distinctively different flavor of things in the *New Jerusalem* in chapter 21. It takes several readings to see it, but eventually one hears a voice from 40 years earlier, that of the apostle Paul, saying "Then comes the end, when [Jesus] delivers the kingdom [His bride!] to God the Father, when [Jesus] puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (I Corinthians 15:24-25).



Isn't that exactly what we have been studying up to and through chapter 20? And Paul did not have John's Revelation on hand when he spoke those words. Yes, Paul, Death and Hades, *after 1000 years*, cast into the Lake of Fire. The last enemy is destroyed! Now, a new era, as the subdued kingdom, ruled perfectly for so long, reverts back to God the Father.

Hear Paul again, 15:28: "Now when all things are made subject to him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him Who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." What a significant statement and how it coincides with this 21st chapter. Notice that in all these 32 "eternity" verses, once the City has descended, the Lamb is always mentioned *in connection with God*. Jesus was always *subject to and united with the Father* ("I and My Father are one"), but there is a reunification here that both Paul and John, hearing from the same Spirit, bring out to us. They are inseparable, God and the Lamb, one, as Jesus always told us, but now the saints will see!

God Himself comes down **(21:3)**. How often have you heard it said that for all eternity the Father Himself - not just the Son of God - is going to *come to earth*, albeit a new earth that is more amenable to Him, to live? Have you not rather heard sermons about us "living with Jesus in Heaven forever"? Notice also here that whereas before, the Scriptures had to describe carefully God's dealings with a specially chosen minority of earthlings, now he is with *men*, for the only men living are the Redeemed, the chosen from all eternity. What a happy company this! "God is with men...and they shall be His people."

The end of pain **(21:4)**. Still tears after 1000 years of Jesus' reign? Oh yes. Loved ones and friends were perhaps caught up in the final Satanic rebellion. Satan has been released from the pit, and allowed to re-capture innumerable people from the old planet. There was the horror of the all-consuming judgment fire that fell on those armies of invaders. They had forgotten tears and sorrows of this nature for so long. Then there was the upheaval of saying farewell to that old planet which had been their home for centuries. But now all of that is gone. Those who have said good-bye to a country can perhaps feel the wrenching here of a people without a planet, at least for a short while. All seems to be in chaos. Once more the heavens are disturbed and even removed. Yes, though redeemed and in new bodies, we will have human feelings. We are not destined to be a race of robots.

A word of encouragement **(21:5-8)**. Caught up in the midst of all this excitement, we tend to forget that all of this vision is a message dictated to John for us. John seems to have needed such a reminder here and he is especially encouraged to tell his readers that what is being said is surely true! What truths are emphasized here? God is making everything new. God is the beginning and the end. God will give life to anyone who wants it. God will be God and Father to any overcomer. The second death is waiting for those who refuse God's love. There is also a catalog of the sins of those who did not overcome.

**Location of New Jerusalem (21:9-10).** The view of the city is begun again here, close-up fashion, as one of the bowl angels (chapter 16) invites John now to take a look at the Lamb's wife. We may speculate that it was the seventh angel, the one announcing that final outpouring of wrath, who speaks here and in chapter 17, describing that other city, Babylon. Here is the last time the Lamb is mentioned *alone* in the 32 *eternity* verses.

As we view the City of God we are going to see things the prophets saw of the Millennial period. There are similarities, as the old city was certainly built in the pattern of the Heavenly one. One thing true in both eras is the *elevation* of Zion. Which part of the new earth that this new mountain occupies we have no idea. Will there be anything similar to a "Middle East" in the configuration of things there? We know there are *no seas*. All is land. And this city is on a mountain. Is it the only such mountain? How great and how high is it? The measurements of the city are given below, but the mountain itself?

So the City now comes down, fully populated by those who escaped the planet's dissolution a short time before. It comes down to nestle into the top of this mountain. We cannot even begin to imagine how glorious a setting this will be. We know that the present earth can be splendid at times. We know that a new earth must be even more splendid. But add to that (verse 11) the glory of God, and we are out of imaginings. We must wait.

**Regarding Light (21:11, 23 and 22:5).** The clear-as-crystal light comes from the glory of God and the Lamb. The lighting system of the old planet, a sun and a moon, will not be relevant here. Night, and the accompanying time of sleeping, will not be needed, for our bodies will not grow weary! One eternal day lit by the radiance of the Creator.

**Regarding the gates of the City (21:12-13).** In the wall that surrounds the square, described later, there are twelve gates, three on each wall, guarded by an angel, and named after the twelve tribes of Israel. Remarkably, Ezekiel describes very nearly the same picture (48:30-35). In his prophecy he even tells us the *name of the tribes*. We know his prophecy, however, is of the old earth, because just before these words is a description of the territory to be allotted to these tribes. These territories, many of which are familiar names to Bible students, will not be known on the new earth. In fact, the 32 verses I allude to as "eternity" contain only one geographical entity that is familiar, Jerusalem! But note that the pattern of things in Heaven had already been on earth 1000 years, and even in our day there are things going on here, in the church, that reflect what Heaven is like.

Two more things about these gates: First, each actual gate is one huge pearl (**21:21**). A pearl of great price reminds those who come into and go out of the Metropolis, of the great price Jesus paid for all of this to be here and for us to be enjoying it. As to the size of this pearl and how it could possibly have come to be, another wait and see. And secondly (**21:25**), the gates will

be open all day! And all day means eternally, for there is no night there. No need to lock the doors when there is no evil abroad.

**Regarding the walls and their foundations (21:14-20).** The apostles will be honored by having their names on the 12 foundations, or foundation stones, of the surrounding wall. This is not the first time these men have been called foundational. Ephesians 2:20 reminds us of the truth of this fact, Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone, but the apostles and prophets being the *foundation* of the spiritual building God is erecting, even now.

**21:15** speaks of the bowl-angel again and lets us know that it's time to measure New Jerusalem. Talk like that brings us back once more to Ezekiel in 40:3. There a man, probably also angelic, meets Ezekiel in the land of Israel, though Ezekiel is a prisoner in Babylon. They meet atop an extremely high mountain, where lies a city. The temptation is to jump to the conclusion that Ezekiel and John speak of the same thing, but the measurements do not match, and we remember our last encounter with that prophet, whose mission is to see and describe the times and places of the 1000 years, not eternity. Nevertheless, once more we are impressed with the knowledge that Jerusalem is meant to be the center of God's dealings in every age.

**The Measurements (21:16-17):** As stated earlier, the layout is square (**21:16**). The figure 12,000 furlongs, roughly translated *1,400 miles*, is given as the overall size. It would seem that this is the total of all four sides combined, or 350 miles per side. We are not sure. From this side of glory though, a city with a 1,400-mile perimeter is no less glorious than one which measures 5,600 miles. Both are incomprehensible. Think of the largest cities of our day with their scant one or two hundred miles around, and the enormity of the place is staggering.

But wait. Did I say it was laid out as a square? Indeed, I was quoting John, that is, the *angel*. But another detail is added at the end of 16: Though the ground floor is indeed square, the three-dimensional structure actually makes this City *a cube*, **stretching** as far *up* as it is *long or wide*. Already bigger by far than any earthly city has ever been, God super-abundantly places layer upon layer straight up into the new atmosphere of this new planet. Our "mile-high" city of Denver causes shortness of breath among the hardiest. Imagine the 350-mile-high City or, why not, the 1,400-mile-high city! But imagine it with a new body easily able to accommodate the breath-taking atmosphere. And of course, imagine, while you're at it, *a new atmosphere*.

Now comes the measure of the wall (**21:17**). There is at first a similar vagueness as to meaning. The 144 cubits, or 216 feet, can be, the way we first hear it, either the height or the thickness of the wall. I suggest thickness. It seems to this earthling unusual to have a mere 200-foot wall enclosing a 350-mile-high metropolis. We can't rule this out, and who are we to call anything Heavenly unusual, but it would seem that the thickness of the wall is being discussed here, and that therefore the height of the wall is as high as the city.

**Construction materials (21:18-21).** The city and the wall are considered separately when speaking of the materials of which each consist. The walls are of jasper. So again we observe that the new earth seems to have properties similar to the old one. Jasper is normally an opaque quartz showing up in an assortment of colors, green being a more common variety. But from the introduction of the word in **21:11** where the light of God is seen as a crystal-clear “jasper”, to this present verse where it is seen in conjunction with a clear gold, we are led to believe that the walls of the New Jerusalem will be nearly clear also, with perhaps a greenish tint to them. The City itself, including every street (**21:21**), is pure gold, but also clear. Who can find words to comment on such things?

**Foundation stones (21:19-20).** Twelve precious stones adorn the foundation stones mentioned above. Of the twelve, eight are readily matched to eight of the stones in the breastplate of the High Priest, where also was the name of every tribe (Exodus 28: 15-30).

**No temple (21:22).** There is no temple here, since God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Yet a major portion of Ezekiel describes a city just like this one, and the specific *details of a temple*. This can only mean that Ezekiel’s temple is meant for the 1000-year period, but when the full glory of God rests on the planet, Throne and all, no temple will be needed.

**Traffic (21:24-27).** It is nearly shocking to be seeing in this city a continued reference to nations. As stated above, all men in this city are saved men. Their nations therefore are saved nations. They shall, it seems, be permitted to populate the earth, though Jesus makes it clear that our present form of populating shall not be a factor here (Matthew 22:29-30). How we shall cover the earth for God’s glory remains to be seen, along with that host of other things. Somehow, when residents have accomplished their various daily tasks, they shall bring the results of their labors back into the City to glorify God and the Lamb with them.

**No evil (21:8, 27, 22:15).** **21:27** echoes **21:8** and previews 22:15. There is constant assurance being given that the former things truly are past. This city is off limits to evil. Evil has been judged forever and is in the Lake of Fire. Only those in the Lamb’s Book go in and out of this City.

**Natural Features (22:1-2).** The vision continues and now makes us turn back the pages of history all the way to Genesis where last we saw a river watering a Garden, and a tree of life. There was only one tree giving life in Genesis, for there were only two people who needed this fruit. Here in Revelation we see trees in the middle of the street and on either side of the river of the water of life. This we have taken to be symbolic, and for us today, that water is a purely spiritual thing ministering to our souls. But there the spiritual body we will have, will need sustenance, and that sustenance is provided in this way.

**Ezekiel (47)** sees much of the same that John sees, but sees it in a different context. He

sees the healing waters (47:1), exactly as here. But in 47:8, when the water reaches the sea, its waters are healed. This will work during the Millennium, which is as far as the Old Testament prophets ever saw, I believe. But in the New earth, there are *no seas*! Also, Ezekiel sees that water flowing from under the threshold of the temple. But, as stated, in the New Jerusalem there is no temple but God Himself. That's why the water in our present chapter proceeds from the *Throne*!

In Ezekiel, the trees, like here, are many, and are on both sides of the river. I believe that the trees and the water are literal there too, healing the poisonous acids that covered the earth when God's wrath was poured out during the bowl judgments. Ezekiel 47 is a fascinating comparison to Revelation 22, but *different* because speaking of a different era of history. I recommend that all serious students of the prophecies of the Bible spend a lot of time deciphering Ezekiel 40-48.

**Zechariah** completes the prophetic look at living healing water: (14:8-9) "And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea...and the Lord shall be King over all the earth..." Again I say that in the final City and earth, there are no seas. Ezekiel and Zechariah speak of Millennial days but they speak of the realities of their Holy City, a place very much like the one we are now studying.

**The healing of the nations (22:2).** It was Ezekiel who first said it, in 47:12 of his prophecy: the "leaves will be for medicine." The nations before us, recall, are comprised of the saved of all times. There is no pain in the new earth, no sickness, no sin, no curse. Why then a need for healing? I speculate, but based on what we know so far: Perhaps this medicine is the *reason* for continued health, a part of the diet of the new world order. Or this could refer to the fact that there are certain aspects of their life in the old planet that need dealt with, as they adjust to the new. See above comments on 21:4 about the wiping away of tears. I believe there is a connection between their need for comfort and their need for healing, *at least initially*.

**No curse (22:3).** One thing is certain. Whatever men inherited initially from Adam is now gone. Sin, sickness, problems of the fallen nature, all done away forever by the Spirit's work in them. All that is left is perfect service to a perfect God, given cheerfully and effectively. And what could God possibly need in terms of service in that day? What are these people who come in and out of the city doing in the new world? Come and see ...

**Promises (22:3-5).** The final promises of eternity have to do with the intimate relationship God will have with His people. They will wear His Name as the followers of the antichrist wore their blasphemous name. They will actually see His face and not die. The strangest part of it all, to me, is that everything good and holy is still on the Planet, though a new one. Oh how God has set His love on us! Jesus is giving the kingdom to the Father, not destroying it after the 1000 years. New Earth shall be our headquarters forever. The Father's very

Throne shall be here. Nations will continue to operate from here. Oh what joys await the people of God!

### 5. Closing Exhortations (22:6-21)

The Bible concludes its 32-verse description of eternity at 22:5. After that are directions, warnings, and invitations.

**John misunderstands again (22:6-9).** There is a bit of confusion in the following conversation that the enemies of Christ have jumped on, to make one last Biblical effort to strip from Jesus His Deity. Recall our earlier discussion of how this Book came to be (1:1). It was from Father to Son to Angel to John. In this final word, an angel is talking. The “he” of verse 6 refers

back to the “he” of 22:1, and 21:15, and finally all the way back to 21:9, where we are re-introduced to a bowl-angel. Though it is the angel’s voice John hears, and the person of an angel of course is standing there, it is the very *words of Jesus being spoken* through that angel. John mistakes one for the other, as many readers have done. He begins to give credit to the angel for what is really the message of Jesus. And once more, as in 19:10, he begins to worship. In his rebuke to John it is noteworthy to see angelic self-concept: (1.) I’m just a servant like you. (2.) I’m obeying the words of this book, like Jesus is calling you to do.

Jesus, through the angel, reminds John of how the message came to him, and of the immediacy of the wrap-up of all things. The nearness of the coming of Jesus is emphasized in verses 6, 7, 10, 12, and 20. One moment He will *not* be here, the next moment He *will* be here. No gradual evolution of His presence. No process. When He comes, He comes quickly.

**Obey this prophecy (22:7).** We are back at the beginning of the book where this same command is given (1:3). Yes, much of the prophecy is symbolic, and prophetic, therefore future, but sprinkled heavily throughout the scroll are commands to obey, visions to cherish, warnings to observe, exhortations to cling to Christ and watch for His quick return. The saint of God is called to believe very incredible things. There is a constant call to worship. A person who can keep all this will be a blessed one.

**Directions to John: Do not seal this book (22:10).** After the previously described worship incident, John is given a word that contrasts with that given to his counterpart Daniel. That prophet was told at the end of his revelation, “...the words are closed up *and sealed* till the time of the end.” This present angel tells John, “*Do not seal* these words.” That must mean we are living in the days that Daniel saw, the days of the Son of Man. And if it does not seem that Jesus has come quickly back to earth, we must learn to see these days as God sees them. In His eyes, Peter tells us, a thousand-year wait is like a day (II Peter 3:8). Peter also reminds us that scoffers will laugh at such logic, and this lets us know that *the time was to be long* (II Peter 3:3). We live in the age of grace, and God has always desired to extend that grace to as many as will hear. Grace and the glory of God keep us from that closing bell. But it will come. And the time, in one sense, is always *at hand*. The world always is ready to be judged. Antichrists abound and Babylon surrounds us in every generation. Let us watch and pray.

**The end of God’s mercy (22:11).** This verse is written for those living just before Jesus’ return, as the Spirit inside John was indicating that it was very near. It is the end of God’s mercy and invitation. It is a locking in of the position of the soul for all time. It is a sad verse for many.

**I come quickly (22: 7, 10, 12, 20)!** And I bring a reward with me. As the resurrected damned are given what their evil works demand (20:12), so the participants in the first resurrection will be given rewards for their good works. These are already saved chosen people.

They have received eternal life as a gift, by grace, through faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Now the Lord lets them see how He appreciated what they did in His Name. Note the similarity to Isaiah 40:10, “Behold the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him. Behold His reward is with Him...”

**Jesus identifies Himself again (22:13).** This part of the message is in 1:8, 1:17, and originally in Isaiah 41:4, “...I the Lord am the first, and with the last I am He.”

**A blessing (22:14).** There seems to be a major disagreement in the textual evidence when it comes to the blessing of verse 14. The King James translation, usually the most trustworthy rendition because of the Greek text it follows, talks here about “doing his commandments” to gain right to the tree of life. Most modern translations have followed another Greek text. This other text reads that persons must “wash their robes” to have that right.

Whatever way one goes here, there is no way a man can “keep the commandments” without “washing his robes” in the blood of Jesus. It is only the new life that flows from God that conforms a man to the image of His Son. Perhaps it was this knowledge that caused an erstwhile copyist to add a comment to the text. Later (I speculate, of course), that comment was included erroneously.

**The cursed (22:15).** John here backs up historically to describe the days of the Millennium, and even our day, when those who are truly God’s are safe within the commonwealth of Israel. In the eternal city, the only evil people outside will be the ones in the Lake of Fire. But here they still seem to be a threat to people moving in and out of the City. The point is easily taken though that the righteous have access to the Heavenly privileges and the ungodly do not. The timing of the statement could also be a factor. Jesus may be talking about the present (in John’s day and ours) state of the city of God.

**Signature of Jesus (22:16).** No question Whose words are being spoken here, but I still maintain that they are coming through the angel’s mouth, for there has been no indication otherwise. With these words, Jesus brings us back to the current situation in the churches of Asia, and thus *all churches of all times*. This Book is for them, and He wants them to know of His worthiness to be heard. Humanly speaking, Jesus comes from the line of David. He is the Jewish Messiah, the Son of Man. But being the Bright and Morning Star, He relates to that which is Heavenly too. The prophecy in Numbers 24:17 and His own imagery early in the Book about stars being the messengers of God (1:20) are recalled by His comment. He is not a created spirit, but truly He is the Spirit Whose brightness is eternal.

**Invitation (22:17).** This is the very Word of Jesus, not a commentary by John. Jesus speaks directly to the human heart here, hands outstretched as when He was on the earth saying “Come unto Me, all you that labor... (Matthew 11:28).” Never did He desire that man be lost. He will do



everything in His mighty power to call men to Himself. When we are fully yielded to Him, inviting people to Jesus is what our life is about, also.

**Do not tamper with this prophecy (22:18-19).** The final warning. Add to the Revelation, and the plagues of it are added to you. Subtract from the Revelation, and the blessings of it are subtracted from you. Some conclude that because Revelation is placed at the end of the Bible, this warning applies to all 66 books. It is indeed a fearful thing to be caught tampering with what God has said. From the beginning God warned His people about this. Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32 strictly command Israel while they are still in the wilderness never to add or subtract from words given by God.

**The end (22:20-21).** One more assurance that Jesus is coming quickly, at least by Heaven's standards, and the work is finished. John gives the amen— so be it, Lord. Come! Then the beloved apostle adds his apostolic blessing and like Daniel and like us, must go his way to wait on all these things to be fulfilled.

### **A final word**

And so I must go my way also. With limited vision, I have shared with you what I was able to see of the coming events of earth's history. This work has been one of discovery, not creation. There are no new revelations from God about our future, though I was certainly able to find things in the Book I had not found before. Those who claim to have new *information* must be viewed with suspicion immediately and often. I have been especially nervous listening to, or even reading books about, persons who allegedly have died and returned to tell us what they saw. Often they add material to the book of Revelation, and I cannot see how that is not in defiance of the final warning of the book.

No, our job is like Josiah's (II Chronicles 34:19), after having been given a copy of the Scriptures. We read it, we discover its truths, or re-discover them, we repent because of what we read, we tell others what we have read. No need for novel information. The 66 Books are sufficient (II Timothy 3:16-17). And of all God's books, Revelation, when discovered, puts a man in touch with the reality of God, and the horrible condition of humanity and one's own self. That's a sure formula for repentance. May God bring these realizations to His people and may He use this labor of my hands to help along this pathway.

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