

# FINALITY

By Jerry D. Ousley

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This book is the culmination of nearly twenty years of study. I can't even remember how many times I have scrapped what I wrote and started again. Time after time, I would see something new as I studied the original language of Revelation, re-examined what I had been taught verses what I learned as I studied. I realize that I am just human like everyone else on this cursed planet. I won't even attempt to say that I am the final authority and that I know everything there is to know about the book of Revelation. But I will say that I have tried to put aside all personal beliefs (except where I have plainly said, "This is what I believe") and have attempted to write what I saw as the truth. I know I had to do a lot of changing. I had to not only scrap words I had written but, in some cases, years of belief from what I had been taught and what I thought I knew. This is the result. Believe it or don't. But know that I haven't written this lightly but have poured a great part of my life into it. I hope that counts for something . . .

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## Chapter 1

# THE FIRST ADVENT

*And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins.*

Matthew 1:21

*Stars* like pure sparkling diamonds dotted the otherwise black sky of the night.

A woman moved rhythmically to the gentle sway of the donkey on which she sat, if you could call the young girl barely in her teens, a woman. But then, all she had endured and experienced during the last nine months most likely made her worthy of the title. The town of Bethlehem was just coming into view in the near distance. The hope of arriving and stopping soon helped her to endure the reoccurring labor pains as she pondered the events of the last few months.

Time had passed quickly, but even so, with all that had happened, all that had forced maturity upon her, it seemed ages ago when the man had appeared out of nowhere, or at least she thought it was a man. But as he spoke, she came to know that he was no mere man but a messenger from the great God she had served all her brief life.

He told her that she was to be the one who would give birth to the greatest person to ever live – the long-awaited Messiah! She couldn't believe it at first. Could it be real? Had she been dreaming? She wiped her eyes but when she looked, he was still there and still talking. Every young girl in Israel had dreamed of being the mother of the Messiah for as long as she could remember. As a child, her girlfriends spoke of it often in the midst of play. They had been taught it from their own mothers who had heard it from their mothers and so on. Deep in their hearts they knew that it would not be, but still they fantasized "could it be me?"

And now, God's messenger was standing in front of her telling her that she had been chosen. After all these centuries and of all the girls in Israel she had been picked. She was from a very poor and insignificant family in Israel – not much above slaves and considered extremely dispensable to the cruel Romans who ruled their tiny country. There were girls much more qualified who were from families of means that could better provide for this longed-for Individual. How could such an obscure girl like herself ever care for a king?

But the messenger assured her that she was the one and told her that she would be with child without having physical contact with a man. This was to be a miracle child there was no doubt. He gave her a sign that these things were true by telling her that her own cousin, Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias the priest was even now with child in her old age. This was another miracle and it struck a chord of joy in her heart because she knew how

much Elizabeth and Zacharias wanted children. All their lives they would watch their other relatives caring for their children with a longing and a spark of jealousy in their eyes. And now, according to the angel, their dream had come true.

She remembered how she had gone to her cousin and spent several months with her until Elizabeth's child had been born. When she got there Zacharias couldn't speak a word because he had doubted when the messenger had told him about it. His lack of speech had been given as a sign that the miracle was true. But after the baby boy was born and Elizabeth had insisted that his name would be John, all those around them said that no one in their family was called by that name and was about to christen him after his father calling him Zacharias. At that precise moment, Zacharias, who had learned his lesson, wrote that their son was to be named John just as the messenger had instructed them and immediately, he was able to speak. Mary remembered how that once his tongue had been loosed, that he gave a speech and she thought he'd never stop talking.

The time had come for her to return to Nazareth. As she looked down at her own body, now six months with child, she knew when she got home things weren't going to be easy. She had been promised in marriage to Joseph, a good man back in Nazareth – a carpenter by trade. She knew she would grow to love him and that he would provide for her as they raised their family. But this was not Joseph's child. She also knew that she had done nothing wrong. She had not cheated on Joseph and she had never been sexually with a man. Even though a baby grew in her womb her virginity was still intact. But who would believe her besides her cousin Elizabeth? Zacharias and Elizabeth believed her because their hearts had been opened by their own miracle. At least God had graced her enough that two people would know that her story was true. How could she face her family? How could she expect Joseph to understand? By Jewish law he could order her stoned to death for cheating on him if he chose not to believe her story. She had to return whether anyone believed her or not and perhaps it would be better to return home where her parents could help her when delivery time came, if they wouldn't disown her. She only hoped that Joseph's love for her would overcome what seemed obvious. And "It would be better to return home pregnant than holding a child in her arms" she thought.

Just as she had expected, when she returned home all her friends and acquaintances shunned her. She had become a disgrace in their eyes. Even her parents looked with doubt as she told her story. It hurt her the most when after explaining to Joseph he turned without words and left. Later she found out that he planned to give her writings of divorce ending their espousal but because of his love for her, decided to do it quietly to save her as many problems as he could. He would not have her stoned. Even though she knew in her heart that God was on her side she felt completely alone and found herself talking out loud to her unborn child when no one was around.

But a few days later Joseph came to her. She could see in his eyes that something had happened because he no longer looked at her as if she had broken his heart, but now that old sparkle she had seen was back in his eyes. He explained to her how that he had dreamed of an angel from God coming to him and telling him that what she had



told was true. The angel had also told him not to be afraid to take her as his wife because this was of God. She was going to give birth to the Messiah and the angel had even told Joseph what His name would be. During the next few months before they were finally married Joseph went through his share of ridicule and hard looks from passers-by. In their minds he was a fool for staying engaged to a girl who obviously had betrayed his faithfulness to her. But then they didn't know nor did they understand what had been revealed to both her and Joseph.

The donkey stopped as Joseph headed toward the door of the inn. The tiny town of Bethlehem was bustling with people – probably three or four times as many as the town could accommodate. The labor pains were coming more frequently now and even though she tried to hide it, she knew that Joseph had seen her occasional slipped-through grimace. He was getting worried and she could see a bit of panic in his face. It hurt Mary to see the look of helplessness in her strong, always positive and calm husband. The man at the door was sympathetic but he had no available rooms. “Is there anywhere I can get my wife out of the streets,” Joseph pleaded. “She is ready to deliver even now sir. Please, is there anywhere at all?” The man shook his head, “I am so sorry, I know of no place.” Joseph turned nearly in tears from his desperation when the man called out, “Just a moment sir; this certainly isn't much but it's yours if you want it. I have an empty stall in our stable . . .” Joseph took a quick moment looking at Mary who nodded her head in approval and then he quickly turned back to the innkeeper and said, “Yes, yes. We will make do with that. Thank you. You don't know what this means to us.”

They followed the man around the house to a small cave behind it. There several stalls were already filled with pack animals and sheep. The odor of dung and hay was not pleasant but they were very grateful to arrive at the empty stall that would serve as their room. Joseph busied himself trying to make it as comfortable as possible but when Mary spoke his name, he knew that it was time. They both prayed for strength. A few short hours later the newborn baby was wrapped in the swaddling clothes they had brought with them and was laying in the manger which Joseph had carefully arranged to accommodate their child.

There was no one else present to witness the miracle birth of the Propheted One - The Messiah. It seemed strangely quiet and really inappropriate that the One hoped for by everyone in Israel, was born in the presence of two of the poorest in the nation. But they weren't alone for very long. A very weary new mother noticed a few men gathering just outside the stable entrance. Joseph went to see who they were and returned to tell Mary that they were shepherds with a strange story of angels in the sky announcing the birth of Messiah. The angels told them that they could find the child wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger. “They want to see Jesus,” he said, “Do you feel up to it?” Strangely she was excited and new strength surged in her as she responded, “Yes Joseph, let them come in.” Soon the little stall in the stable was crowded with shepherds who had left their sheep in the fields above Bethlehem to see this new born baby. They seemed to adore Him and worshipped Him. Mary wondered and thought about these things in her heart. It seemed hard to believe that the squirming, helpless little baby laying

in that manger was really the Messiah – the One awaited by the whole nation and silently, the whole world.

Little did they realize that this was the first advent – the first dramatic coming into the world Messiah would make. His first appearance was extremely important because he had come not only to rescue Israel but make it possible for everyone in the world – both Jew and Gentile – to be free from the curse that God had been forced to make in the very beginning by Adam and Eve. He had literally come to die as the last sacrifice needed to pay for man’s long history of sin.

## **THE MISSION OF THE BABY**

A reading of the first four books of the New Testament would reveal how this newborn, innocent baby would grow to become a man of miracles. He would bring good news to those bound in poverty and sickness. He would proclaim the love of God like no other in history. His mission encompassed the entire world. Those who would come to Him could finally be free from their great and impossible debt to God. They could be free from hatred of others because of their race or family. They could be at peace in their souls. They could be saved.

Even at the beginning of this first advent preparation was being made for the second and final advent. His life brought healing like a river in a desert. But His death brought redemption. He became the way, after dying the shameful death of a criminal on a cruel Roman cross for all of creation to finally have the chance to be free from the curse that loomed above it.

More than two thousand years have passed since this child grew into manhood and paid that awful penalty for our sin. Since then, thousands and millions have come to Him finding freedom from sin. It is all in preparation for His second Advent. He will come again. He will appear in the clouds just like He left at the end of Luke’s Gospel and the Beginning of the book of Acts. He will return for all to see – a welcomed sight for those who have become His devout followers and a dread to those who have refused to believe in Him.

We stand at the brink of this return. My grandpa was a preacher. Not just a speaker but an old-fashioned preacher. I remember him loudly and confidently proclaiming to his listeners how that Jesus Christ would one day return. He used to say that “the coming of the Lord was just around the corner.” To continue with that old cliché, I want to reaffirm it by saying that He has rounded the corner and is standing at the door, hand poised ready to knock. The time is at hand.

# **THINGS THAT WERE**

## Chapter 2

# THE KINGDOMS

*And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.*

Daniel 2:44

*An* undefined excitement surged through her body as she reached for the coveted but forbidden fruit, but now, the devil, by way of the serpent, had come to her and suggested that it was really okay. Secretly she had always wondered how this forbidden fruit would taste. She lifted it to her mouth and the scent was exhilarating. Eve knew it was wrong, for God had instructed her, along with her husband, Adam, that, while they had freedom to eat of any of the fruit in the garden except for this, that in the day they ate of it they would surely die. But the serpent had informed her that God knew that if they ate of it, they would become like Him and that He wouldn't kill them. But God never said that He would kill them but that their disobedience would lead to death. Strangely the devil-filled serpent had been convincing, and so in a moment, life changed, as she took a taste of the sweet fruit.

Immediately Adam showed up; perhaps he had been watching from a distance. She spoke as if in answer to his question, "Adam, I have eaten from the fruit and God was wrong; I didn't die. It is wonderful. Here, have a taste for yourself."

Adam reached out to receive the fruit. A drop of sweat trickled down his forehead, even though he too had longed and wondered what it would be like. He didn't want to disobey God but now his woman had eaten of it and she was not dead, so perhaps God was wrong. She didn't have to tempt him much because it was what he really wanted to do anyway. But now he had someone to blame it on and so he quickly took a taste.

You can read the rest of the story in Genesis 3. Man didn't die physically, at least not right away, but that day something did happen. The living spirit inside of man died and physical death by aging began. Immediately they realized that they were naked and made a meager attempt to cover themselves. Some have taken that to mean that the fruit wasn't actually fruit but the realization of the sexes and that this was the beginning of sexual temptation. However, the original Hebrew means fruit and fruit it was. Some claimed that it was an apple or maybe God created a special fruit just for this occasion. He certainly could have done that; He did create a special fish just for Jonah. But all this trivial thinking detracts from the larger sin. Yes, God had told them not to eat the fruit, but I wonder if it was the fruit that brought on the knowledge of good and evil (I might add, tainted by evil because it was obtained in sin) or actually the act of direct disobedience to God.

## MAN DEFIES HIS MAKER

From that day to this man's desire has been to find a way to fulfill his life and be happy without the help of God. His new-found knowledge of the difference between good and evil, as we have already established, was received, tainted toward the side of evil because it was obtained in sin. Because of this, he lived in sin and it became natural to him and so he wanted to find his way on his own. God actually showed mercy to Adam and Eve when He drove them from Eden. The casting out was not necessarily a punishment as much as it was to keep them from eating from the Tree of Life. Had they eaten from the Tree of Life after their sin, there may have been no chance of redemption. He would have been granted eternal existence, but in sin without hope of redemption (or at least that's the way I understand it).

Man has continually defied his Maker. The first recorded was Lamech in Genesis 4:23-24. The wording of this passage seems to indicate that he had killed a man who had wounded him. In defiance of God for putting a mark on his ancestor, Cain, for killing his brother Abel, he said that if Cain should be avenged sevenfold then he himself seventy-fold. In other words, he was ten times worse than Cain.

Man continued in rebellion until the time came when the only ones who were still faithful to God were Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives. This resulted in the Great Flood which destroyed all life except that which God instructed Noah to take aboard the ark. So, man started over but still with the knowledge of good and evil tainted by sin.

Next, we see Nimrod, great grandson to Noah, standing as a mighty one on the Earth. This too is spoken in a negative connotation. Nimrod was the ancestor of the Assyrians and the Philistine people who plagued Israel so much in the past (and still yet today). Nimrod built Babel. Remember the tower that was to provide an escape for man just in case God went back on His word to never again destroy the Earth with a flood? This tower was built in effort for man to rise above any judgment dished out by God. In fact, their intention was to build it up to Heaven. Yet before they got good and started God confounded the languages so they could no longer communicate and so stopped the building of this rebellious tower.

Man continued in sin to try to out-smart God so to speak, and gain control of the world. Many kingdoms rose and fell, including those of Egypt and Assyria. The empires began to take power and the first really great empire that tried to conquer the entire Earth was that of Babylon. This great city and kingdom were built from Babel and Nimrod was the ancestor of this empire. In fact, "Babylon" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Babel." They grew great in power and military force and began to conquer all the smaller kingdoms around them. God even allowed them to conquer Israel. In reality He used this first mighty kingdom, that dreamed of world dominance, to bring judgment and punishment for their continual disobedience to His will. Babylon grew great and powerful. But that was about to change.

Tossing and turning, troubled by a dream of the night, King Nebuchadnezzar awoke in a cold sweat. It seemed so real and he felt as if he had a responsibility to share it with all, and he was willing, but there was only one problem; he remembered the urgency of it but for the life of him could not remember the dream itself. Now sleep escaped him as he anxiously awaited the morning.

## **VISIONS**

As the dawn broke, he entered his throne room and gave the order to assemble his most trusted advisors - the elite wise men of the kingdom; the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers and Chaldeans, and instructed them to reveal to him his dream and its interpretation. Surely with all their charms and supposed revelations into the future, one of them would know what he had dreamed and would be able to tell its meaning. It was after all, of great value to the world, so surely it would be a light thing for one of the Babylonian gods to reveal to those supposed to be so close to them. Surely to these men of great knowledge it was but a simple request.

Instead, to his utter amazement, his request was met by what seemed to be a fearful dread by his stunned advisors. They claimed power and influence with the gods but when it came right down to it, they too were mere men. What the King asked of them was impossible. "Please tell us the dream and we will gladly tell you what it means."

What? Had he been deceived all this time by these men? He had supported them and made them rich and now he realized that he was a fool for believing them. In a fit of anger, he declared, "If you cannot tell me the dream and the interpretation then you will all be executed by being cut into pieces and your homes made ash heaps!" When they still could not satisfy his request, Nebuchadnezzar ordered his army to begin the executions. He was so angered by this that his decree extended to all quarters of his empire.

The Bible does not record how many were actually executed when they came to Daniel and his companions. They were exceptional Hebrew captives from Jerusalem, and he had placed them in with his scholars for training. They had proven to be very influential with their Judean God. But a decree was a decree and they had to go with all the rest. It would seem that Daniel had become friends with the captain of the king's guard, Arioch, because when Daniel basically asked him what was going on, he took time to answer him.

Through him, Daniel gained an audience with the king and instead of justifying why they couldn't tell the king what he wanted to know he simply asked for time to come up with the answer. This impressed king Nebuchadnezzar enough that he temporarily stopped the executions and gave Daniel the time he needed. So, Daniel returned to his friends and together they sought God. In a vision of the night God gave the answer to Daniel.

Long story short, Daniel was able to tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream and the interpretation. Just as the king had thought, the dream was a very important dream. It revealed the future empires that would mold the history of the world. He had dreamed of a multi-layered statue. Its head was of fine gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron and feet of iron mixed with clay. Then a stone cut without hands struck the image on the feet breaking them into pieces. The rest of the statue tumbled down and was crushed to pieces and blown away by the wind like the chaff from a farmer's threshing floor. No trace of them could be found and the stone became a great mountain filling the entire Earth.

This was the interpretation: The head of gold was the Babylonian kingdom, that of Nebuchadnezzar. The chest and arms of silver represented the next kingdom, that of the Persian empire. Next came the bronze kingdom – that of the Greeks under Alexander the Great. The kingdom of iron was that of the Romans, very strong as represented by the iron. The final kingdom, that mixed with iron and clay, shows a kingdom that is unstable. There has been much assumption about this last kingdom and we will explore that further but first let's examine some of the other visions Daniel experienced and wrote about in his book.

## **DANIEL 7**

In Daniel 7 another vision, this time one given to Daniel, is described. He saw the four winds of heaven, or the winds from North, South, East and West, blowing strongly and stirring up the Great Sea (another name for the Mediterranean Sea). From this raging of its waters and amid the great waves crashing together, four different creatures, also called beasts, arose from the water each one of them different from the others.

The first creature is described as being like a lion that had eagle's wings. This creature is also seen in Greek Mythology and is called a griffin or griffon. Later in Daniel 7 it is interpreted to Daniel that these beasts represent kingdoms. We are not told specifically what kingdom is represented by each of these, but when compared to the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, it stands to reason that the first kingdom depicted with the image of the lion with eagle's wings is that of Babylon and compares to the head of Gold. The weakening of the Babylonian Empire is depicted by the wings being plucked off and the beast standing on two feet like a man, then a man's heart was given to it. The Babylonian kingdom was overtaken under Belshazzar (see chapter 5 that talks about the hand of God writing on the wall predicting that the kingdom of Babylon was given to the Medes (Persians). By the way, this vision in Chapter 7, as said in verse 1, was given to Daniel during the first year of Belshazzar.

The second creature shown to Daniel is represented as a bear raised up on one side holding three ribs in its teeth. It was told "Arise, devour much flesh!" Following suite to Nebuchadnezzar's vision, this creature must represent the kingdom of the conquering Medo-Persian Empire and compares to Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the statue's chest and arms of silver. The Bible doesn't interpret the meaning of the bear being raised up on one side or the three ribs in its mouth and so I am not going to attempt to interpret that



either, but it is interesting to note that the Persian empire was stronger than that of the Medes (raised up on one side) and during the reign of the Persian Empire the three largest kingdoms conquered were that of Babylon, Lydia and Egypt.

The third creature was a leopard with four wings on its back and four heads. It is the same as the belly and thighs of bronze in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The Bible says in Daniel 7:6 that dominion was given to it. This creature is none other than the Greek Empire that was made strong under Alexander the Great. The four wings and four heads most likely correspond to the four facets of the kingdom that arose after Alexander the Great. It was given dominion and subdued all the other kingdoms.

The fourth beast is not described by animal characteristics but is said to be "dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet." (Daniel 7:7). In the beginning it is comparable to the legs of iron in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar up until the little horn arises from the ten. By the way it seems that the horns represent rulers but we are not told who these kings were. Therefore, we will accept the word at that and just know that ten kings will arise. After this a smaller horn rose up, uprooting three horns and had eyes like a man and spoke pompous words. This corresponds with the feet of iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. We will stop here and revisit this with the feet of iron and clay.

## **DANIEL 8**

In Daniel 8 we see yet another vision given to him and this one seems to magnify the kingdoms of the Persians and Greeks. More detail is given of the two. The Ram is most likely representative of the Medo-Persians (note that one horn was higher than the other, similar to the bear being raised on one side – Possibly showing that the Persians were stronger than the Medes). History reveals that they became very powerful in the North, South and West (as in 8:4).

But then came the Male Goat from the West with a notable horn between his eyes (Alexander the Great) running with great force and furious power and broke off the horns of the Ram and so the Greek Empire conquered the Persian Empire. When Alexander died the Empire was divided into four splintered kingdoms each struggling for control.

There is more detail about these kingdoms in Daniel 10-12. But this chapter is not intended as just another history lesson. These four kingdoms are important because they lead up to the final kingdom, the one that will be in power when the things at the end of chapters 7 and 8 occur.

It is significant, to me anyway, that no kingdoms are listed between the Roman Empire and the final kingdom which will be that of Anti-Christ. There is no mention of the powers of the United Kingdom, China, Russia or even the United States. There is no mention of Hitler. You would think that prophecy leading to the end times would certainly include these governments. But the Bible is silent concerning them. I know of no prophecy that offers an explanation. It is my opinion that these powers are not mentioned

because, except for the short-lived push of Hitler, these other kingdoms really showed no interest in world dominance and control and all of them except for China actually withstood Hitler in his reign.

If I am right, then it stands to reason that the list of kingdoms desiring to conquer the world would skip after Rome directly to the kingdom of the Anti-Christ who does want world control. This will be the kingdom of feet of iron mixed with clay. With this in mind we revisit the conclusions of Daniel 7 and 8 and also Chapter 9.

Returning to Daniel 7, as we already identified, this vision begins with the kingdom of Babylon. It was during the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's son, Belshazzar. This vision outlined the then present kingdom of Babylon, then Persia, Greece and the dreadful kingdom that identifies with Rome. This empire is outlined with ten horns that are identified as kings. Again, this is not intended to be a history lesson and if you are interested in these ten horns you can research them. The Bible simply tells us that they were ten kings and at the end one more horn arose. This horn succeeded in plucking out three of the horns, and this king became greater than all the others. He spoke many pompous words against the people of God according to the vision

## **DANIEL 9**

In Daniel 9 we see the prophet praying to God regarding the prophecy by Jeremiah that Israel would be in captivity for seventy years (see Jeremiah 29:10). This was a literal period of seventy years at the end of which God did restore Israel to their promised land.

But while Daniel sought God regarding it and repenting on behalf of the nation of Israel, God sent the angel Gabriel to give a more prophetic interpretation of that time. Hidden within the actual period of seventy years was the prophecy that would lead up not only to the restoration of Israel to their land but also of the restoration of the entire creation to God. Many translations of the Bible interpret this as seventy weeks with the idea that it is seventy weeks of years or a total of four hundred and ninety years. This is true but the translation is more literally seventy sevens instead of seventy weeks. So, it is more accurately divided into seventy periods of seven years. These periods of time are determined to do these things:

- (1) To finish the transgression (to seal the transgression)
- (2) To make an end of sins (to detain our holiness and sin and sins)
- (3) To make reconciliation for iniquity (to finish and to bring a shelter for depravity)
- (4) To bring in everlasting righteousness (to seal everlasting righteousness for the eons)
- (5) To seal up the vision and prophecy (to make it official)
- (6) And to anoint the Most Holy (anoint the holiness of Holinesses)

First Gabriel said that there would be seven sevens (or forty-nine years) to restore and build Jerusalem. From that time there would be sixty-two sevens (or four hundred and thirty-four years) until the Messiah would be cut off but not for Himself (the crucifixion)

of Christ – He died as the sacrifice for the sin of the world). The king at that time (the Roman Empire) will cut off the city and the temple. There will be conflict and war and desolations over the Holy Land until the time determined. This is the time we are now in. After Jesus was crucified and resurrected Jerusalem was over-ridden, the temple desecrated and destroyed by the Roman, Titus, marking the end of the sixty-two periods of sevens (four hundred and thirty-four years). From that time until today there have been wars, conflicts and desolations allowed by God (determined).

The final seven and the final ruler (the same as the one horn that arose after the ten and struck down three) will make a covenant (make a deal) with Israel for seven years but in the middle of that period will bring an end to the offerings and sacrifices and will commit abomination and desolation until the end.

This is the anti-christ and the time of the legs of iron mixed with clay. He will be the one who will bring the world finally to the brink of disaster and will result in the coming of Jesus Christ. According to Daniel 7:13-14 and also 7:25-28, at the end of the reign of this anti-christ, the Ancient of Days, God Himself, will give dominion and glory to the One like the Son of Man who comes with the clouds. He will take away the dominion of the anti-christ and be given the final kingdom – The Kingdom of God, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.

These end-time things will bring an end to the transgressions and sin of mankind. It will culminate in the final and absolute reign of Jesus Christ, the Lion/Lamb as depicted in Revelation 5. All six of those things mentioned in Daniel 9 will come to fruition in Christ and the second advent, when He finally returns to take possession of the redeemed Earth. I pray you are ready for this. I hope you have faith in what is prophesied. Enough proof has been established to know it is true and that it is coming. Are you ready? I pray you are ready.

## **THE VISION SEALED**

Daniel 10 and 11 record detail about what took place in Ancient Greece, leading into the Roman era. Again, because this book isn't meant to simply be a history book, you can look up the facts that were prophesied in ancient history books like Josephus and the books of the Maccabees. These two chapters prophesy this time period with great accuracy. Since this book is dedicated to the prophecies of the end-time we skip over this history to chapter 12 of Daniel.

This chapter begins with the statement that *“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people...”* (12:1). We know that it is during the end time because it also says that *“There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.”* (12:1). Verse 1 also says that the people would be delivered, all who are found written in the book. It isn't specified that this is the Book of Life found toward the end of Revelation but it most likely is because it also talks of the resurrection of the just and the unjust. We will talk more of the

resurrections later in this book but there are signs that tell us Daniel is seeing the end-times as found in the Revelation.

We don't exactly know all that Daniel saw because he is told to seal up the book until the end-time. I believe that time is now because the mention of travel (run to and fro) and increased knowledge. God has given us much insight from the prophecies found in Daniel and Revelation.

## Chapter 3

# WHAT JESUS SAID

*Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and the end of the age?"*

Matthew 24:3

*Some* thirty-three years after His birth, the babe in the manger, now a man, sat on a grassy slope on the hill called the Mount of Olives. Surrounded by His disciples He was about to answer their questions. As they had left the temple and some of His disciples began to point out the various buildings, stones and precious gems that had been used in the construction of the regal structure, in response to their words Jesus said, “See all of this? The day is coming when one stone will not be left upon another.”

The curious men asked Jesus, “When will this happen?” Specifically in Matthew 24 they asked “When will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3). Looking out over the future, both near and distant, Jesus began to outline things that would have to take place before the end. His answer was not just about the destruction of the temple but of the final attempt of the devil to overthrow God’s people, and if possible, God Himself.

## **FALSE APPEARANCES OF CHRIST**

These things are outlined in three of the four Gospels, namely Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. Here are the things that these three chapters tell us. First, Jesus said that many would come in His name, even identifying themselves as Christ. A lot of people will be deceived into believing them. We could cite numerous incidences and people who have attempted to do this. But rather than point fingers it is best to let others know how to recognize these charlatans. Jesus told us that He will indeed return but when He does it will be just like He left. Acts 1 tells us that Jesus departed to Heaven, rising up on the clouds. Those who witnessed this were told by the angels that when He comes back, He will come in the same manner He left, this time descending on the clouds. We are shown His return in Revelation 14:14-16 which says, “Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.’ So, He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.”

All other claimed appearances of Christ on this earth are bogus for the most part. Our Lord may allow someone to have a vision of Him but He will not actually walk on the earth until the time spoken of above. These deceivers will attempt to fool people into

following them in order to exploit their finances and lead people astray. Men will always seek fame and fortune and will not hesitate to do it in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

## **WARS AND CONFLICTS**

Next Jesus told them that there would be wars, conflicts, and rumors of wars. He said that nation would come against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Also, there would be famines, pestilences and earthquakes in many and various places.

Some have argued that these things have always happened and they would be correct. We have often taken it to mean that these things will be worse and more frequent during the days leading to the end-time. That may be true, but I also wonder if Jesus wasn't saying that they would continue until the end. What I mean by that is that conflicts between men, natural disasters (or really unnatural disasters – because these things came into being because of the sin of man and are not the original nature of mankind or the world) will continue until someone comes on the scene purporting to bring an end to them all. This will be the anti-christ as we shall see in Revelation.

His disciples would be persecuted, arrested and prosecuted for the sake of the Gospel. But Jesus pointed out that this would become an opportunity to witness for Christ. Lawlessness would increase even to the point that one's own family members would betray them to the authorities because of their Christianity. Sound familiar? It should because this is already happening in many nations of the world at this very moment. Even in our own country we are hurtling ever closer to the time that our witness will be played down and we will be encouraged to be quiet, not mentioning what the word of God really says regarding sins that are becoming so called "normal" rather than a shock to the public. We are coming closer and closer to having our witness silenced by law citing that we are being disrespectful of others' beliefs. While we are to ever love even our enemies, we are never told to tolerate, look over or pretend that those who are practicing sin are okay with God.

Jesus also said that the gospel would be preached in all the world to all nations before the end will come. We are very near that now. Only a very few nationalities and very small people groups have not heard the gospel. Note that He did not say that every person would hear but that every nation would hear.

## **ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION**

Our Lord then turned the attention to a time referred to in both the Gospel account and Daniel as the "Abomination of Desolation" (see Daniel 11:31, Daniel 12:11, Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14). This is a time that has already happened but also a future event. What I mean by that is this: There was a time in 70 AD when Titus attacked Jerusalem, overran the city and destroyed the temple. The Jewish people were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. But before the temple was destroyed a pig was sacrificed on the altar. Remember, in the Law of Moses pigs were an abomination. To sacrifice a pig on the altar was a direct challenge to the God of Heaven. This really happened and Luke's

Gospel tells us (Luke 21:24) “And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. This is the time in which we now live. We are “the age of the Gentiles.” This “age of the Gentiles” is the parenthesis between the weeks spoken of in Daniel and the final seventh week.

That time will end when the anti-christ takes over. From the reading in Matthew and Mark it appears that this Abomination of Desolation will occur once again. I feel justified in saying this because it is added in both Gospels that it will mark a time when there will be tribulation so severe it has never happened before and never will again. To say that it will never happen again sounds a lot like a final statement to me. This must be the end-time. We are told in Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20 that the persecution was so bad that unless those days are shortened no flesh (which includes all life on Earth) would be saved (nuclear destruction? Maybe. Only God knows). However, for the sake of the elect (Christians – God’s people) that time will be shortened.

### **AGAIN - FALSE CHRIST’S AND PROPHETS**

Once again Jesus speaks of false christs and adds false prophets. He is of course speaking of those attempting to take our Lord’s place, but He is also referring to the beast and false prophet of Revelation.

He adds that these false christs and prophets will be so convincing with signs and wonders that if it were possible, they would deceive even the elect (God’s people). Thanks be to God that those who are truly the elect will not be deceived. It didn’t say that they would be deceived but that if it would be possible. However, they must be pretty convincing to even come close to that level of deception.

### **THE COMING OF CHRIST**

Jesus then tells us that after this tribulation that signs from nature will happen. Namely, the sun darkened, the moon not lighting up the night sky, stars falling from the heavens, and the powers of space shaken.

As mentioned before, we will then witness the coming of our Lord. We are told that all nations and tribes on the Earth will witness Him descending on the clouds with great power and glory. His angels will come with the sound of a trumpet and will gather up His elect from all parts of the Earth.

When this happens, Jesus encourages His people by saying “*Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.*” (Luke 21:28).

### **THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE**

Jesus paused and illustrated what He was saying with a parable, a story comparing this time with the fig tree. When the fig tree is budding, we know that summer is close.



In like manner when we see these things begin to take place, we know that the coming of the Lord and the kingdom of God is close.

We need to stop here a moment and clarify. So many, especially today, are trying to predict when the Lord will return. Jesus specifically said, *“but of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”* (Mark 13:32 – See also Matthew 24:36 and Matthew 25:13). So, unlike many self-proclaimed prophets today, we don’t know the exact time, the month, the year or hour He is coming. In fact, Jesus further explained that only God the Father knows this. However, the signs of the times allow us to know that it is near. Our calendars are marked with the first day of Spring, the first day of Summer, the first day of Fall and the first day of Winter. These might be the official dates, but the actual weather tells us when Summer is really here. The calendar might indicate that summer is here, but if the birds aren’t singing, the sun isn’t shining and the temperature isn’t warm, perhaps it isn’t really here. So, we may specify a day, we may say the Lord is coming next week, but only the actual signs point to His actual return.

The question arises, are we ready? Have we prepared our hearts and souls for the time of His coming? You can be ready despite what others may tell you or what you might think. We can know we are ready. We must become part of God’s elect so that we won’t be deceived. You may say, “I’m smart. I won’t be deceived.” But if you aren’t among God’s elect you will be deceived. Trust me, coming to Christ is the absolute only way.

## **WATCH**

Looking up. That’s what Jesus told us to do – watch. This should be a natural trait for the believer in Christ. We believe He saved us; we believe He is coming again, so we watch. We look for Him. As a kid, when Grandma and Grandpa came for a visit, it was always a very special and welcomed event. We’d watch all day. When would they get here? It seemed we just couldn’t wait. How much more should we be looking for our Lord’s return?

Both Matthew and Mark record the story Jesus told about a master who took a trip to a far country, leaving his household charge to his servants. In the story the servant in charge got lax in watching for the master’s return. He began mistreating the other servants, drinking, carousing and disregarding his master. Luke says *“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”* (Luke 21:34-36).

The indication seems to be that if we aren’t watching, perhaps we aren’t ready to go. Now we know that salvation is only by grace and believing that Christ is the Son of God and that He arose from the dead. Yet, if we are not watching maybe we didn’t really

believe. Suppose we got it in our head but not in our heart? If we are watching then we are expecting. We are eager for our Lord's return. If we aren't then we need to re-examine our faith. A true born-again believer should be watching, expecting and hopeful in His Lord's return.

### **THREE MORE STORIES**

In Matthew 25 Jesus further illustrates His return with an additional three stories. The first is about the wise and foolish virgins. Note that all ten are virgins. They are all part of the wedding. But none of them expected the bridegroom to delay his coming. It stretched out so long that all ten had fallen asleep. But five of them had made preparation by bringing extra oil for their lamps just in case something happened. The other five were totally unprepared. When the bridegroom finally showed up all ten lamps were about to go out, the oil in them spent. They asked to borrow from the five who had brought extra oil but alas there was only enough to refuel their own lamps. By the time the five foolish virgins went out and purchased more oil, the doors to the wedding were already shut and they were not allowed in.

The message is that we should not only be watching but also be prepared. Part of expecting is to be prepared. We get prepared by knowing the word of God – Reading our Bible and knowing what to expect and what to look for when it comes to watching.

The second story is again about a man taking a journey. Before he left, he divided out talents to his servants with the expectation that they would use them to grow them into more talents. When he returned two had done exactly that. But one chose to bury his talent and return what he had been given. Long story short, his only talent was taken away and given to the one who had the most. The story seems to indicate that another part of watching is to be working, thus growing our Master's talents.

The final story takes place after the Lord's return. It is the story of the sheep and the goats. The sheep are identified as those who had served others, visiting the sick and those in prison. Feeding the hungry and clothing the poor. He said that if they had done it to others, they had done it to Him. Likewise, the goats were those who had not ministered to Christ by serving others. So, once again part of watching is also serving others.

We must be watching. We watch by expecting, being prepared and serving while we wait. These are the words of our Lord about what to expect as the end approaches; as we move toward finality.

## Chapter 4

# WHAT PAUL AND PETER SAID

*For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will 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 thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

**All** through the scripture the teaching of a time when we will be with God can be found. It has always been the hope of men and women who seek after the Almighty. Even in the day of Job, who is believed to have lived before Abraham, during his both physically and mentally horrible experience of pain, he cried out, *“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at the last on the earth . . .;”* (Job 19:25). The hope of Heaven that will cause us to escape the pain, horror and death of this world and world system has always been a part of the worship of God, throughout Judaism as well as Christianity.

In the first days of the newly birthed Church great persecution was seemingly the norm for believers, those of the Way. It was expected that to believe in Christ would result in persecution, imprisonment and even execution. The Church had no magnificent edifices, buildings or Christian art to luxuriously decorate their places of worship. In fact, they felt lucky if they could meet in each other’s homes to worship without disturbance. In Rome we are told that they worshipped in the catacombs – where the Romans buried their dead – because they knew that because of Roman superstition, they’d be left alone there.

Huddled around dim candlelight, they could quietly whisper their songs of praise and worship and talk of the mighty God they served and how they were redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Quite a different picture from that of our magnificent places of worship today, isn’t it? We take for granted the freedom and ability to worship Him as loudly as we want to in comfortable surroundings with excellent music. There’s nothing wrong in that, unless we forget our beginnings.

Even in those settings of misery, persecution and the ever-looming threat of death, the hope of Heaven permeated their belief in Jesus Christ. The angels had said when He departed from the Mount of Olives, *“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”* (Acts 1:11). Just as our Lord had taught them, as we saw in the last chapter, they looked for Him – for His return, from day one on.

His second appearance was taught as being eminent from the start. Because more than 2000 years have passed since the infant Church was told these words, many have fallen away in disbelief. But those of us who know, continue to believe and expect.

Our Lord told us that the day would come at a time when we least expected, when many had grown lax and concerned with other things. I believe it. I have come to know it. Just as surely as the Earth is round, the sun shines behind the clouds and the moon lights the night sky, the promise He gave us will take place. I am unshakably convinced. His day will come and we must be ready, watching and expecting.

## **1 THESSALONIANS 4:13 – 5:11**

Both Paul and Peter wrote about this very thing. First, Paul wrote in his first letter to the Church at Thessalonica an encouragement of the order of the resurrection. You can read it in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11. Take time to read it now.

We are so sad and sorrowful when someone we love dies. It seems final. We grow accustomed to coming home as adult children and smelling the wonderful odors of mom's cooking. We look forward to dad's big smile as he greets us at the door. We reminisce and remember as we share with our siblings. Family reunions are so fun. But then the day arrives when someone is missing. Mom is no longer doing the cooking. Dad's chair sets empty. We miss a sibling or a cousin, or an aunt or uncle. It isn't the same. We mourn their passing.

But as believers in Christ Jesus there is another story. It isn't final. Yes, we miss them. Yes, we are sad and weep at their departure. But we have a hope that those who don't know the Lord cannot fathom. You see, we believe in the resurrection. We are told that the time is coming when our Lord, Jesus Christ will return in the clouds just like He left in Acts 1.

It is the general belief that when one who is a believer passes in death, that his or her spirit goes to be with the Lord. Jesus told the thief on the cross beside Him, who had defended Him to the other thief, *"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."* (Luke 23:43). He wasn't baptized, he didn't weep at an altar, he just asked Jesus, *"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."* (Luke 23:42). We could talk doctrine; we could cite scripture; we could argue and fuss. But the truth remains, that thief's spirit, when he died, left his physical body and went to Paradise with Jesus. The body dies, is put away, whether in a coffin and buried, laid in a tomb, cremated or whatever. It is vacated by the spirit. The wicked dead goes to Hades while the Christian dead go to paradise.

Jesus told a story about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. Some think this to be another parable while others believe He was telling about an actual event that had happened. It really doesn't matter because the point Jesus was making isn't changed either way. You can read it for yourself in Luke 16:19-31. The rich man wasn't a righteous man while Lazarus was. Both died and the rich man found himself in a place of torment in flames. In the spirit world, somehow, he could see across the expanse that separated Hades from Paradise, called Abraham's bosom in this story. There he could see Lazarus and the discourse regarding his brothers still on Earth took place. The point is that

Lazarus was not laying in a grave awaiting resurrection day, nor was the rich man. Their souls were still alive in their particular locations.

Returning to 1 Thessalonians, Paul says two things that let us know that the spirit will one day be reunited with the body, albeit, a glorified body. First in 4:14 he writes, *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.”* Note: “will bring with Him.” In other words, they are with Him now and when He returns, they will return with Him. Then He says in verse 16, *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”* Again, in other words, before those who are alive are received up, the dead bodies of those who return with Him will rise from their graves, be made into a glorified body, and will be reunited with their returning spirits. I hear the question, “But what if the body was cremated? What if it were lost at sea and consumed by fish? What if it had been torn by lions or wild beasts, eaten and digested? I can’t give you scripture for this except that Paul taught that the dead will rise first. It is significant that He never mentioned a grave. He simply said that the dead would rise first. That tells me that our Lord knows where every cell of every person on this planet is located. Whether rotted in a grave, digested by sea creatures or wild beasts, or burned to ash, God knows how to bring it all back together, turn it into a glorified body and resurrect it. To date, and I believe for all time to come, man has not been able to reassemble a man like that. Only God can do it. And He will.

This is why we don’t have to sorrow without hope for the future. Our loved ones who have died in Christ will walk in God’s final kingdom. They will be able to talk to us, and we will know who they are. We have hope because we have a promise from the Promise Keeper.

Then those of us who are still alive and remain on the planet will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet our Lord in mid-air. We will be changed. Paul also writes in 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 *“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our lord Jesus Christ.”* Wow! What a powerful statement!

From the words of Paul, we can summarize that we are going to have a new body. When Jesus arose as the first fruits of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20) His body was one that could vanish and be transported somewhere else instantly. He appeared in a room without walking through a door (Luke 24:36). He had a spiritual body yet a body that was also physical because in the same passage He ate (Luke 24:42). He was the first fruit of what we are going to be because of His sacrifice, His death and His resurrection. John wrote in 1 John 3:2, *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been*

*revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."*

Again, returning to 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul concluded this chapter with the words, *"Therefore comfort one another with these words."* What a comfort indeed it should be to have the assurance and the promise that we will be with Him. Despite how we go, whether, in an accident, or martyred, or if we die of old age. Or even if we are alive when He returns! We can know that we are going to be with Him.

## **WHEN IS HE COMING?**

*"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* (Mark 3:32). The exact day and hour no one knows except for God. This is true. Anyone who sets a date for the Lord's return is a false prophet. We cannot know what God has not given us to know. Nor should we even try. In my opinion, for what it's worth, it brings relief to not know.

That being said, Jesus Himself gave us signs to watch for. He told us to watch. In 1 Thessalonians 5 Paul continues, *"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant women. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation."* (1 Thessalonians 5:1-8). In short, we are not in the dark about this. The Bible has given us signs to discern the seasons of the times. When we see these things beginning to happen then we can watch for His coming. We don't know the exact moment. We won't until after it has happened. But we can see what is taking place around us and know that the time is near. And it is now. I firmly believe we are living in that season. As we have already learned from the parable of the ten virgins, let's be prepared because the Bridegroom is certainly coming and we must be ready.

## **GOD'S WRATH**

Paul went on to write about wrath. This is a key. We may not escape man's wrath. In fact, believers in Christ have suffered the anger, malice and wrath of man since the beginning of the Church. Because man has been given a free will, he has the choice to be angry with, intolerant of, and persecutors of those who believe in Christ.

We may not be able to be exempt from man but on the other hand, Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10, *"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."* This is a much better promise than to be liberated from man's

wrath. We will be taken before God pours out His wrath on this planet. Wrath of man? We can't escape it. Wrath of God – Praise the Lord, we won't be here!

The rest of this chapter deals with how we should comfort each other, treat each other and love each other. It also speaks of how we are to live for Him. While we are here let's serve God. The day will come when it will be time for our exit orders, and when they come through, we are out of here!

## 2 THESSALONIANS 2

Paul sat down and wrote again to the believers in Thessalonica. From the reading it seems that some had arrived proclaiming that the Day of the Lord had already come. He needed to set the record straight on this. And so do we also today. There are those among us who teach that it has already happened and that we are now living in the Heavenly Kingdom. If that were so then we were lied to by our Lord who never lies. If this is the Kingdom of God then we are deeply in trouble and we should be gravely disappointed. It is by no means anything like Heaven. In fact, it grows daily more like Hell. Here's what Paul said: *“Now brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, when the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonder, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

The great Apostle to the Gentiles tells us that the day will not come until the falling away takes place and the man of sin is revealed – the son of perdition – the lawless one. We should say something here regarding “the son of perdition.” This term is used twice in the Bible, first referring to Judas who betrayed Jesus (see John 17:12), and second here in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 referring to the coming evil one. The meaning of the infamous title is the same in both instances – “the son of destruction.” There is no reference anywhere in scripture that suggests that Judas will return from the grave as the one Paul refers to who will appear before the Day of the Lord. It is merely a term used in both instances to indicate that the individual described is one destroyed because of the choice he has made. Judas chose to betray Jesus and in his grief over his choice took his own life rather than repenting and returning to the Lord. Because of his choice he became a



son of destruction. The son of destruction in 2 Thessalonians is the one coming who will make himself out to be Christ and this is the anti-christ.

There are two things that will happen before the Day of the Lord according to verse 3. they are the falling away and the revealing of the lawless one. To get the complete picture here we need to compare this verse in 2 Thessalonians with what Jesus said when He was telling His disciples what was to come in Matthew 24: *“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”* (Matthew 24:12). As I am writing this there is a great revival taking place at Asbury College in Kentucky. I am thankful for this. There could be several revivals – times during which God calls His people to renew and strengthen their relationship with Him and souls won to the Kingdom. Praise God for these times. They are certainly needed in this day and age which is leaning more and more toward allowing the lawless one, the man of sin, the son of destruction, to assume his role on the stage of history. It is coming. It will happen. The Lord has said it and He does not lie.

The big question is who is the one holding the lawless one back? 2 Thessalonians 6-7 describe this: *“And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.”* What is the restraining force and who is He? Some have speculated that “He” is the Holy Spirit and that He will be removed when the Church is removed, and then the son of perdition will be revealed. Others speculate that “He” is the Church and when it is removed from the Earth then the anti-christ will reign down his havoc.

First, it cannot be the Church because everywhere else in scripture that the Church is referenced it is always “she” and never “he.” It also does not stand to reason that it is the Holy Spirit. Both of these entities are required for people to be saved during the reign of the son of perdition. We cannot be saved unless we are renewed by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). If we are saved then we are a part of the Church. So, both will still be present during the time of the anti-christ.

In the passage, this withholding force is both described as it and He. Verse six says that we know what is restraining and that he may be revealed in his own time. So, it is the restraining force. God is not allowing him to be revealed until it is the right and proper time. Verse 7 says *“He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.”* In other words, He will continue to restrain until the time comes and then He will stop restraining – taken out of the way. It is the power of God who will hold the anti-christ back until it is the proper time.

Verses 1-12 explains the falling away. The reason for it seems to be that there will be many who profess Christ who haven’t really received Christ. We are living in a time when many practices have been accepted and promoted in the bodies of worship calling themselves “a church.” We must be very careful here. I never want to dismiss or condemn something that is actually a tool of God to win souls. But there is a difference in winning souls and attracting a large following because of popularity, music and

entertainment. Just because we go Sunday after Sunday to a building where there is popular music, great lighting effects and a show to see, doesn't necessarily mean that we are right with God. There is nothing wrong with presenting our best to God. But when the show must be perfect and without flaw rather than allowing the spontaneity of the Holy Spirit then we are entertaining rather than leading worship. When the message must be politically correct, entertaining and perfectly sounding to the ear rather than speaking the prophetic word of God, then we are in trouble. We are not promoting God but the entertainment of man. In many of these congregations a call to repentance is never or seldom given. People make a decision to become a member of that "church club" rather than heart-felt repentance of sin and allowing the Holy Spirit to change them into a new creation. Those who go through the motions and demand perfect entertainment will fall away when that time comes. Unfortunately, right now, the stage is set for a "great falling away." It will happen when the time comes and the restraint of the Holy Spirit stops.

I urge you to make sure you are saved. Confess your sinfulness and acknowledge that Christ died and rose again, is alive today and is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Believe Him completely and entirely. When you do this from your heart and are truly sorry for sin realizing that without Christ we are hopelessly doomed to eternal destruction, we will be saved. We will be made a part of God's Church and not just a "church club."

## **2 PETER 3:11-13**

To complete this chapter, we need to look at what Peter said about the time of the end. He wrote, *"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."*

Some believe this to be a conflict with what we read in the Book of Revelation. Peter says that the Earth and atmosphere will be melted away with fervent heat while Revelation seems to show a more progressive change. However, when John saw the new heaven (atmosphere) and the new Earth it is not said how it came to be. The narrative in Revelation 20 describes the final judgement of the wicked dead. Then chapter 21 begins with John seeing the new. It is most likely that what Peter describes takes place between these two chapters in Revelation. If so, then there is no conflict whatsoever.

Rather than haggle over this fine point let's focus on the message Peter was getting across, namely that according to his promise we are looking for the new atmosphere and perfected, restored Planet Earth to its original Garden of Eden state. This is the completed act of Redemption. What man did by sinning against God in Genesis has finally been restored now by Christ Jesus. As Paul taught (see 1 Corinthians 15:45), the first Adam gave it all away. The last Adam (Christ) became a life-giving spirit and thus restores it all. What a God we serve. What a plan He has in salvation. We can be a part of it all. But we must make the choice – the choice to be redeemed. If you feel His call

right now, don't hesitate. Confess your sin, believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead and you will be saved. It is your choice. But what a choice it is.

## Chapter 5

# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

*“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants --- things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John...” (Revelation 1:1)*

*The* water gently lapped on the shore, but it was not a picture-perfect beach and was far from a paradise. The island was barren and scarce of food. It was much too far for any man to swim in attempt of escape. Every so often a ship would come by and just enough food supplies would be dropped off to keep the hundreds of inhabitants alive. It was perhaps the cruelest prison devised by man, working long hours of slave labor in the mines then fending for themselves to find food and sustenance. The island was called Patmos.

John, who was often called the beloved disciple because he was the one who lay against Jesus' chest during the famed last supper, had been banished here. He was a prisoner of the Roman Government for his faith in Christ. Most men dropped on this island were expected to die. They would either be worked to death, starve to death, venture into the water to be drowned or worse, attacked and eaten alive by sharks, or maybe killed by their own piers.

Though in extreme conditions, it was here that John saw the vision that we now call the Revelation. Despite his conditions John begins his book with nothing but positive thoughts. He addresses the prophecy in the form of a letter to seven congregations in Asia and it is not said to be from John, but from the Lord Jesus Christ. John quotes the Lord as saying, *"I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End . . . who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."* (Revelation 1:8).

The Apostle tells us that it was the Lord's Day – Sunday, the first day of the week – The day our Lord was resurrected, in the Spirit, or in other words, completely immersed and absorbed in worshipping the Lord, when he heard a voice from behind him. The voice identified itself as being none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. This first chapter indicates that we know that John didn't just pick the largest of the congregations in Asia who would be the recipients of this letter but that Jesus instructed him just who was to receive it (see verse 11).

From this we can know that this was a well thought out and purposeful revelation that Jesus was giving to John. It was a concise account of history, present and future. It is meant to be a revealing, an unveiling – of the very plan of God concerning man after his fall in Eden. The rest of the Bible gives us accounts of how God dealt with man over the centuries and millenniums as well as telling us about His provision for the forgiveness

of sin by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The other letters found in the New Testament give us examples and instructions as to how we should live as we walk in grace.

But Revelation puts it all into perspective. As we have already stated, in the book we are given a concise history of the Church as well as a brief narrative of the history of the nation, Israel. Then we are given the account of how they are treated during the time of the end. This, in a nutshell, is the Book of Revelation.

The appearance of Jesus Christ in Revelation is very significant. When we think of Jesus, we most often think of a kind-faced, bearded man in his early thirties who looked like anyone else during His time. He was not a rich man but rather lived in poverty. He had no permanent home and frankly, if He was in the world today as He was then, we'd most likely label Him as a lazy, below standard, homeless person. The Bible tells us that He associated Himself with those most people considered to be "sinners." They were people who seemed to have the most problems. They were drunkards, prostitutes, tax collectors and lepers. They were the base, common people of the day.

Jesus didn't portray Himself as a king. He laid no claim to a golden throne, a magnificent palace or multitudes of servants. He didn't command a vast army. He simply walked through the crowds of the mass of humanity, calling them to repentance and healing their sick. He wasn't afraid to go near the lepers as they covered their faces and cried through the streets, "Unclean! Unclean!" In fact, He commanded leprosy to be healed. He made the blind to see, the crippled to stand up straight and walk and yes, even raised the dead back to life.

He appeared to be like any ordinary man and it was proven by the Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers as He was condemned to die the most horrid of all deaths – unrecognizably beaten, then nailed to a rough, wooden cross which was placed vertically in the ground leaving the one nailed to it to hang naked in front of all in public shame until he died. It was excruciatingly painful and unimaginably humiliating.

Because most who suffered such a death were considered to be criminals, very few experienced compassion from those who looked on. Jesus' case was no different. Though many of His devout followers were there, looking on in helpless horror, most of the people mocked and made fun of Him. They were cruel, relentless beasts who called themselves the civilized and elite of society.

We are told that Jesus gave His life. It may appear that it was taken from Him at first glance. But think of it; if He was who He claimed to be, if He was the Son of God, more - even the very God in the flesh, then at any given moment of His crucifixion He could have commanded the army of Heaven to instantly consume those who were executing Him. He who gave Samson his extraordinary strength could have ripped the nails from the cross and commanded His enemies to be swallowed up by the ground on which they stood. No one or nothing could have come against His complete and terrible power. And He was all these things. If we are a believer in Jesus Christ then we not only

believe what we read in the Bible about Him but we have born the witness of the truth in our hearts. We know this to be true.

Jesus didn't come down from the cross. He willingly gave up His great power and allowed men to do these terrible things to Him. He suffered pain most will never know. He withstood temptation to overpower His captors in a way we will never comprehend. He laid down His life as the final, complete and whole sacrifice that would pay for the sin of every man, woman and child living and who would ever live.

But there was a time when Jesus didn't appear this way. It happened one day on what we have come to call the mount of Transfiguration. The books of Matthew, Mark and Luke record this event (See Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9 along with 2 Peter 1:17-18). Only three of Jesus' disciples were privileged with this awesome sight. The Bible tells us that Jesus went with Peter, James and John to the top of this mountain. There the Bible tells us that two ancients from the past appeared, namely Moses and Elijah. Moses, the one considered to be the Great Law Giver (though God really gave the law), and Elijah, the great prophet. Jesus met and spoke with these two on top of that mountain, while the privileged disciples looked on in amazement. Then Jesus was transformed – transfigured, right before their eyes. In these accounts we are only told that His face became as bright as the sun and His robe became whiter than they could completely describe and was brilliant with the light coming from it.

The Bible doesn't come right out and say this so I will share it as what I believe. My suspicion is that during that moment on top of the mountain Jesus was revealed to these men in His true form. That form is more completely described in this first chapter of Revelation. In my opinion that is why John immediately knew that it was the Lord – He recognized Him from that day on top of the mountain.

When John turned around to see who was speaking to him, He saw a figure standing in the middle of seven lamp stands which are identified at the end of this chapter by Jesus Himself as being representative of the seven churches. We can speculate all we want about this but, as I said earlier, in most cases where the scripture is representative of something else it is clearly identified just as in this case.

The One standing there was clothed in a garment that extended all the way down to his feet and had a golden belt around His waist. His hair was described by John as being white as wool or snow, His eyes like flames of fire, His feet like fine brass that had been refined in a furnace, and His voice seemed to be more than one. The best way John could describe it was like the sound of many waters as they lapped against the shore. He carried seven stars in His right hand (later in this chapter identified as the angels of the seven churches), and a sharp double-edged sword extended from His mouth. His appearance was as bright as the sun shining in its full strength.

Many have attempted to identify what each of these descriptions of Christ mean, some of which may be right and some of which may be wrong. I'm not going to attempt to do that here, though some are very obvious to anyone who has read and studied the

Bible for very long. But I do want to say this: Jesus appeared to John in His complete majesty. John knew who He was, not only as His Lord and Savior, Jesus, but also as the all-powerful God who created the universe and everything in it. He was so stricken with awe that the Bible tells us that he fell to His feet like a dead man.

Then something else happened that completed His identity. The Bible tells us that He laid His right hand on John and told him not to be afraid. John had heard those very words many times before. He clearly made known that He was the one who had lived, died but was now alive for eternity – for ever more. Now, instead of the meek and mild man we see in the Gospels, He plainly says that He has the keys that open and control Hades (the place of the wicked dead) and death itself. This all powerful being instructed John to write down what he was about to see starting with personal statements to the seven congregations in Asia, but also included what would take place after this.

The thing of all this is, Jesus wanted us to know, through His disciple and now Apostle, John, just what was going to happen. We are told about the age of the Church, its victories and failures, and what the final outcome of all would be. He had John write concerning His second coming which He had promised as He left this world in Acts 1. He has given us a warning and not just in our own day and time, but during the early days of the Church. Jesus tells us what will happen so that we will recognize it when it begins. It is a revelation, not a hidden thing that is impossible to understand.

Somehow, I think Jesus knew that there would be so many and varied explanations of this last book of scripture. I believe that He knew we would argue and squabble over its meaning. Even in His early days He knew exactly what was in the heart of man (John 2:25). He was willing to take that chance so that some would know and recognize what was happening when it began.

In this first chapter of Revelation, Jesus told John to write about the things he had seen (which he did in the gospel bearing his name as well as in three letters), the things which are (what was taking place then – namely the Church represented in the seven letters to the seven congregations) and the things which shall be (the prophecy of what was coming afterwards).

Jesus told John in verse 7 that every eye will see Him when He returns in the clouds, including those who pierced Him. Today we have the magic of satellite television which lets us witness events as they happen even on the other side of the world. Those who pierced Him will see Him in the final judgement. Truly every tribe, nation and people on the earth will mourn, whether in grief or joy, because of His coming.

While I will be the first to tell you that I am only human and I am susceptible to mistakes like anyone else, I know that the time is near. Many believers sense the same. Perhaps you are one of them. It's like the breeze that begins to blow before the storm comes. We can see the leaves turning, and you can nearly feel the moisture in the air. We don't know the exact moment that the drops of rain will begin to fall but we know they are coming. At that precise moment we can choose to get ready for it, put up our things



that we don't want to get wet or blown around, or we can ignore it, take our chances, and be caught up in the aftermath of the storm when it hits.

Like the coming storm we are given these signs and this warning by Jesus Christ Himself. We can choose to throw our hands in the air in disgust of all the many and varied interpretations, or we can grab the Bible for ourselves, read it, read the prophecies in the Old Testament and see the obvious fulfillments in the New and those not yet fulfilled, in the book of Revelation. When we know for ourselves what the Bible says (and I encourage you to not just take my word for it but to read it for yourself. Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart and listen to Him) then we have the tools we need to be prepared. We can board up the windows of our souls. We can make provision for what we know is coming. Or we can do like the foolish virgins in the parable and only take what we need for now and run out of oil.

Before we close this chapter, we need to take a moment and address the “sevens” found herein. They are, the seven churches, the seven Spirits before the throne of God, the seven golden lampstands, and the seven stars in His right hand. Three of these are readily identified in this very chapter by the Lord Himself.

The seven churches are all located in what is called Asia, now all in Western Turkey. They are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. The seven lampstands are these very seven churches as He identified in verse 20. The seven stars are the angels (messengers – could be literal angels or pastors) of these seven churches.

The seven Spirits in verse 4 are a bit more complicated because the Lord chose not to clearly identify these. Some have said that they are representative of the seven dispensations – seven periods of time as outlined in the Bible when God dealt with man in different ways, each teaching man a new area in which he could not fulfill the will of God and designed to show man just how much he needs a Savior. Others have said that it could be representative of the complete perfection of the Holy Spirit because the number seven is commonly associated with completeness. It is also called “God's perfect number” because it is used often throughout the Bible.

While God chose not to specifically tell us exactly what they represent, both explanations could be true and perhaps both are. Often in scripture passages have taken on double meanings. Whichever the case they do not affect the outcome of the final message of Revelation.

Verse 3 tells us that those who read this prophecy are blessed – made happy and joyful. We have made it the opposite today. We make it a drudgery. We tend to fill people's hearts with fear (and probably those who are not ready should fear). We try to twist it to fit our interpretation and so make it mysterious and confusing. But it is not meant to be so. That's what happens when man puts his hand on things. Let's search the scripture and make it to be true, happy and joyful.

The introduction is complete. It is time to now dive into the prophetic teaching of the seven churches in the following two chapters. So, here we go ...!

# **THINGS THAT ARE**

## Chapter 6

# THE AGE OF THE CHURCH

*“... What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.”*

(Revelation 1:11)

*Jesus* told John to address his letter to seven specific congregations. I have often wondered why Jesus picked these specific groups of people. Had not Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles, established congregations not only in these areas but also throughout Greece and other parts of the then known world? According to Church historians some of the Apostles had traveled as far as India establishing congregations. Would our Lord purposely leave them out? The Roman Empire was still in control of things at this time and a congregation had been established in Rome as well. Would it not have made sense to write such an important letter to this group too? What about the main counsel of the Church leadership? Were they not still based out of Jerusalem? So, if what we would consider to be the headquarters by today's standard was in Jerusalem, wouldn't it make sense to address the letter to the governing body?

I believe Jesus picked these seven for a specific purpose. I want to go on record as saying that I recognize the value of the instruction found in each letter to individual believers. These things are also very good examples to congregations of people. They let us know that we can grow cold as a group and as individuals unless we keep ourselves on guard. There is great value in them for the Church and Christians of every age.

But it goes deeper than that. Nowhere in the Bible will we find that these letters specifically represent the history of the entire Christian Church. I'm not going to justify this by any means. I refuse to spiritualize scripture where God has not told us it is representative. These letters were written to these seven specific congregations to warn them about their condition and tell them what was going to happen if they didn't get themselves straightened up. Of that there is no doubt.

Still, we can question why Jesus chose to put these letters in the middle of such a great and important message that He was about to reveal to John. To think that they have no prophetic value just doesn't really make sense at this point, at least, not to me.

While I will not spiritualize, I will also acknowledge that, even though God can see into the future like it is happening today, John had no idea of what was going to happen in the Church other than the promises given to them of the second coming of the Lord. Except for what God allowed him to see in the Spirit, he had no way of knowing where the Church would fail, succeed or grow. So, he didn't know to write what these seven congregations could represent.

It is ironic how that each of these short letters with very blunt commendations, rebukes, and instruction on how to overcome, so closely resemble seven different and distinct times in church history. Each one aligns itself characteristically and historically with a certain period of time. It is also significant, in a prophetic book telling of what is to come during the end times that our Lord would inject these as a sort of parentheses between the description of Himself and the prophecies of things to come.

In a way, the Church as a whole is a parenthetical incident in the history of man's relationship with God. Nowhere in the Old Testament is it referred to except for the few passages that speak of salvation coming to the Gentiles. The Old Testament gives the account of God's dealing primarily with the Jewish people – His chosen people. We have the early days and instruction recorded in the New Testament. The Gospels tell us of the promised Messiah and how that He was rejected by the Jewish nation mainly because they were looking for an immediate deliverer. Jesus Christ was that deliverer but God had planned so much more for the deliverance provided by the Messiah than just freedom from the rule of man. God was providing deliverance and freedom from the curse of sin placed on mankind and the earth when Adam and Eve failed in Eden.

Consequently, the Church was heavily persecuted by the Jews in its early days, and because it freed men from the slavery of sin and pronounced that all religion was wrong except the worship of God, Christians found themselves hated by God's chosen race and by their friends and neighbors simply because they had discovered the One and True God – a God of infinite love, mercy and grace, who wanted to bring peace into their lives and restore His creation back to Himself. Sinful man could not understand this. And so instead of wide reception of their teaching they were met by governmental persecution as enemies of the state.

This sets the stage for the first period in Church history represented in the letter to Ephesus. Notice in the beginning of the letter Jesus describes Himself again as He who holds the seven stars and walks amongst the seven lampstands. Toward the end of Revelation 1 our Lord very plainly identifies the seven stars as the angels (messengers or pastors) of the seven churches and the seven lampstands as being representative of the seven churches. Once again, I question, why these seven, when so many other, more significant and larger congregations existed in the world? I believe that it is because these seven churches resemble and are representative of those seven historical periods of the Church.

## **THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS (Revelation 2:1-7)**

Our omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipresent (present everywhere at the same time) Lord told the Ephesian church that He knew of their works, their labor, their patience, and how that they could not bear those who were evil. He knew how that they had tested those who claimed to be prophets from God, spewing forth false words and outright lies,

and had proven them to be false. He knew how that they had persevered, performed their work of winning souls with patience, and had labored for the name of Christ tirelessly. In these things our Lord commended this congregation.

But He had something against them in that they had abandoned their first love. Of course, when we come to Christ, our first love is God and our Lord. We have realized what He has done for us in dying for our sin on Calvary and extending His mercy and grace towards us allowing us as unworthy sinners to be born again into His glorious kingdom. When we come to Christ in this manner understanding what He has accomplished to provide this for us how can we help but fall in love with Him? We begin to work and labor to win others into the Kingdom. We begin to breathe, eat and sleep Christ.

The one thing we must guard against is becoming so zealous and dedicated to our mission and goal that we somehow forget all about the beginning, our personal relationship with our Lord, and our tolerance for those who need to come to Him. In the Gospels Jesus was called a glutton and an alcoholic because He associated Himself with tax collectors, drunkards, thieves, adulterers, and those the higher Jewish community thought of as “low-life.” Why did Jesus risk these accusations that would disgust us today? He did it because these people needed salvation. Many of them did the things they did because they were tired and weary of the many laws that had been forced upon them by the Jewish leaders. They were sick and tired of religion and so they turned to other things in attempt to satisfy themselves.

But nothing could bring satisfaction. They were open to things that could change their lives. Then along came Jesus preaching a much different message than that of the Pharisees. He talked about love, honesty and integrity that was simple yet went way beyond what they had heard and seen out of the Jewish leaders. They witnessed great miracles of healing from Jesus that served as proof of the truth of His message. Consequently, they flocked to Him.

It is no different today. Those who need Him the most, often come to Christ in droves once they see the true simplicity of the Gospel. What they rebel against is the organization, the rules and regulations, and the authority subjected upon them by religion. That’s what happened to the church at Ephesus, and it is what has happened to the church structure of today. Men have a tendency to organize and rule after a time. This organization and rule often take the place of freedom, grace, and mercy. We begin to look more to the rule book and the decisions of our leaders rather than seek God in prayer and listen to the Holy Spirit speaking in our hearts witnessing of the word of God. When this happens, we have left our first love.

This is where the Church was toward the end of the apostolic period, the time when the apostles lived. The Church had become more organized and was leaning more on their organization than upon God. Jesus told them in no uncertain terms to remember from where they had fallen, to repent and to return to their first works or their lampstand would be removed from its place; in other words, taken from the presence of the Almighty.

Our Lord did commend their hatred for the deeds of the Nicolaitans stating that these deeds He also hated. In a nutshell, these were followers of Nicholas (which is the Greek form of Balaam). Remember that while the Israeli people were in route to the Promised Land, they had an encounter with Balaam. He was described as a prophet of God. Balak, the king of the Amorites, asked Balaam to place a curse on these people passing through their land. God wouldn't allow Balaam to do that, but later on, in Numbers 31, we see that Balaam instigated a plan to have the men of Israel to take women of the Amorites as their wives, which had been strictly prohibited by God during the time of the Law. This caused them to allow foreign and false gods and caused the people to compromise their beliefs and the Law.

This is exactly what this group, during the early days of the Church, did. They claimed to be Christians but actually taught that loose morals concerning other gods and immorality were okay. It was an attempt to corrupt the Church. We still have Nicolaitans around today (maybe not in name but certainly in practice).

Jesus concluded this letter, as He did all of them, by saying, "He who has an ear, let him listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches." In other words, he who understands, take heed, listen and be obedient to the warnings and instruction of the Spirit.

He finished the letter with a promise. Those who successfully overcame would be privileged to eat from the Tree of Life found in the middle of God's paradise. When last we saw the Tree of Life it was located in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden, God must have transported this tree whose fruit would grant eternal life, into Heaven. So those who overcame during this period would be allowed to eat from this tree from which no man had ever eaten before.

In summary, the letter to the church at Ephesus represents the first period of Church history, from the beginning of the Church to the end of the age of the apostles. It was a wonderful period during which the Church grew with leaps and bounds as people, both Jew and Gentile, flocked into its folds. It was not marked by big buildings but with congregations of people in each city. It was the first age of the Church.

### **THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA (Revelation 2:8-11)**

The second period of Church history is represented in the short letter to the congregation of Smyrna. Apparently, this group of people suffered intense persecution and aptly are characteristic of the period of intense persecution of Christians. Throughout the centuries Christians have always been persecuted in one way or another, whether physically, emotionally or verbally. In many areas of the world (particularly in Communistic and Islamic countries) Christians are still under intense persecution. Today we are seeing more and more restrictions put upon Christians in these particular nations. In many Islamic countries to tell someone else about Jesus Christ is punishable by death.



During this second period of Church history Christians were persecuted everywhere they went. They were daily in peril of losing their lives just because they believed in Jesus Christ. There is no rebuke to be found in this letter to the Church at Smyrna and it is largely due to the fact of their persecution. During times of persecution a Christian must be sure of his or her faith. It is not a time to be faltering in our experience with God. Therefore, it requires a believer to be certain and secure in his faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no room for doubt. Because of this those who suffer intense persecution have nothing in their lives to rebuke.

In this period Jesus once again describes Himself as “The First and the Last, who was dead and came back to life.” This would serve to be reassuring to those being persecuted. It was important to know that Jesus was there at their beginning and that He would be with them until the very last moment. It was also good to know that He was dead and came back to life because it let those being persecuted even to death, to know that in Christ they would live again.

Jesus told them that He knew of their works, their tribulation and their poverty. Most that live in persecution are extremely poor by this world’s standards because they are not allowed the means to afford the comforts of life. From my contact with people in the Mid-East today, where Islam is the strongest, I am told by them that Christians are not allowed to be educated or hold good paying jobs. They are only offered the worst of jobs – The ones no one else would want. Because of this they are very poor.

But Jesus reminded those of Smyrna that they weren’t really poor. It was placed in parentheses like it was whispered and was a secret. It was an eye wink from God reminding them that in reality, though they had little in human comforts and possessions, they were rich in a way that the world could not understand. And so it is still. Whether we have great possessions, fine homes, or we live in poverty and a shack that’s falling apart, if we have Christ in our lives and we are dedicated to Him we have riches that this world system could never understand nor comprehend. We have discovered what Ponce de Leon looked for – A fountain of youth. It is not something found in the water, or in a pill that can be swallowed, but in a relationship with God. It is being restored to Him. Because of our faith we have the hope of eternal life. How could any riches to be found on the earth compare to that? How could anything be more precious than to live forever with God? It is riches beyond our wildest dreams!

Jesus told them that He was aware of the blasphemy of those who claimed to be Jews but in reality, were of the Synagogue of Satan. He was speaking of false religion. He was talking about those who claimed to know God or be of God but were really representatives of the devil. These were those leading the persecution. Down through history and particularly in the Middle-Ages, it was those who claimed to know God who persecuted Christians the most. If believers did not conform to what those in power believed then they were called heretics and put to death because they believed the truth.

Even yet today, as throughout history, it was those of other religious beliefs, whether pagan or some form of Christianity, which issued the most severe persecution.

We can say this in the face of Communism and Atheism because even these belief systems that deny any form of divinity are in themselves a religion. Wars wherein thousands if not millions, have lost their lives have been fought in the name of Jesus Christ. What a travesty to our Lord who came to bring life and peace! Those who persecute torture and kill others in the name of Christ or any deity are really of the devil. They are worshippers of the devil and are in reality soldiers of his vile kingdom.

Jesus did not promise to stop their persecution. In fact, He told them not to fear what was yet to come. He told them that they were about to be thrown into prison and be tested. This testing in many inhumane circles meant that they would be tortured. Though mankind in a sense was the greatest of God's creations, he is also the worst. Only man can devise and carry out without conscience, painful, mutilating, horrible things on his fellow man. In his fallen state and under the influence of the devil, man is his own worst enemy. Our Lord also told them that they would have tribulation for ten days. Many have speculated as to what is meant by those ten days. They have been associated with ten periods of time, ten Roman rulers, or even a literal ten days that is yet to come. What the Lord meant by that, I really don't know, so I'm not going to further speculate at this time. Suffice it to say that whatever He was referring to was not a good thing.

Jesus told them to be faithful until death. He could have delivered them from their horrible persecution just like He could to those who are yet persecuted. Why He doesn't can only be answered by Him. Part of the reason is that each man has his own free will and our Lord will not interfere with that. Unfortunately, man's free will often results in the pain, suffering and persecution of the innocent. God cries for those victims. He will also keep them in a special place. While we don't hold all the answers, and never will until we reach Heaven and hear the answers from God Himself, we can rejoice in the promise to those being persecuted. Jesus said, *"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."* Physical death will result on this earth, but because of our faith in Christ, neither man nor the devil can rob us of eternal life. The crown of life cannot be taken from us. The only way to lose it is to give it up.

The second period of Church history is marked in blood by persecution. They were hunted by the Romans, other pagan religions, and even the Jews. They were hated because the devil hates Christians associated with God. He carries out his hatred through unregenerate men and will persecute until the death. But he can never take away the riches held by those who are true believers in Jesus Christ.

Finally, Jesus makes the promise to those who overcome that they will not be hurt by the second death. What a significant promise! The second death is one of eternal death, opposite of eternal life. All of mankind, unless found alive at the return of Christ, will suffer death once. But those who know Jesus Christ as Savior will only suffer it once and for only a short time. On the other hand, those who don't come to Jesus Christ will suffer death a second time – A death that will never end; one that will be felt and go on forever.

## **THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS (Revelation 2:12-17)**

Around 313 A.D., the new Roman emperor, Constantine, was converted to Christianity. It seemed a time of rejoicing to Christians throughout the empire because it meant the end of persecution, at least from the Roman government. New laws were put into place protecting Christians. Constantine issued "The Edict of Milan" commanding the tolerance of the Christian religion, ordered that Sunday (the now celebrated day of Christians honoring the day of Christ's resurrection) be given the same honor as other pagan feasts and celebrations, made it illegal for the Jews to stone Christians to death, and issued a decree to stop the gladiator sports (even though this persisted until the fifth century).

It seemed a new day had dawned for Christians. They could finally worship the Lord without going into hiding and they could pursue the same occupations and comforts of others in the empire. But it also caused a whole new set of problems. Even though they were now recognized by the Roman government, their tolerance demanded that they also accept some of the pagan religions as well. In order to get along with the government, compromise was in order. While that might seem to be the right thing to do to honor the freedom of all men, we can never accept and condone the practices of false religions as equal with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

For this reason, the letter to Pergamos begins with the description of Jesus as "He who has the sharp two-edged sword." In the first chapter of Revelation Christ is described as having a double-edged sword coming from His mouth. The double-edged sword is that which divides in two. It separates good from evil and allows no tolerance of evil. Because it comes from His mouth it can be no other than the word of God. This description of Christ is pertinent to their compromise. It demands that we do not compromise.

Jesus further states that He knows that they are living where Satan's throne stands. In other words, they are right in the middle of all that goes against God. There were still many true believers there because Jesus tells them that He knew of their works, how that they had remained strong in their faith and did not deny Him even when one Antipas was martyred there.

This congregation held to Christian values but they also allowed things among believers that rubbed raw against the Lord. They are accused of allowing the teachings of Balaam which stated that it wasn't wrong to eat things knowingly sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual impurity. Apparently, they allowed those who held to these things to be accepted as members of their congregation. Also, there were found among them those who also held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. In the first letter we stated that these were those who depended more on their own organization and their own efforts and provisions rather than those of Christ. Jesus plainly stated that He hated this doctrine. Still, they had allowed it. It was plainly a congregation of compromise.

They are told to quickly repent or they would find themselves fighting with Jesus who would use the sword of His mouth against them – He would fight them with the very word of God that they were supposed to be living their lives by. Those overcoming were promised to eat of the hidden manna – the food from God, and would be given a white stone with a new secret name written on it that no one else knew. In this time period when a vote was cast it was done by white and black stones. A white stone meant acceptance while a black stone represented rejection. The white stoned promised by Jesus meant that they would be accepted by Him. This was a promise worth holding to.

Yet today, we find those compromising in the Church. While many are sincere, true believers, there are also those who allow sexual impurity and compromise with the teachings of the world, even to the point that they don't believe the Bible to be the final authority. They hold to their organizational beliefs and insist on complete obedience to their own teachings. While some organization is a very good thing, when it supersedes the word of God and their own beliefs are held to, even when proven wrong by the Bible, then they are in extreme danger of being like this compromising congregation. We must overcome.

### **THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA (Revelation 2:18-29)**

In 380 A.D., another Roman emperor by the name of Theodosius took the rule of Constantine a step further. He proclaimed Christianity as the official religion of Rome. This opened the door for the Church to become completely corrupt. The first Christians never imagined this day would come. It was a time when instead of dying because one was a Christian, people began to die because they weren't a Christian. Leaders of the Church suddenly became very powerful political figures. They set up the priesthood, proclaiming these to be official representatives of God. As such, the top priest was considered God's official and highest representative and his word was given equal authority to the Bible.

The time of compromise was at its height because the only way to keep from demanding that everyone who worshipped false gods not to be executed, was to accept them as Christians. So many pagan practices became accepted and even condoned by the Church.

Christianity was now very political. Men were fooled into doing things they were told pleased God, only to further the political position of the leadership. We might ask the question, "Why didn't true believer's stop this tragedy?" The answer is that because the Bible was only written in Latin at this time, and only the well-educated could read Latin, people depended on the religious leadership for the truth of God's word. They could tell the people whatever they wanted and they had no choice but to believe them. It was truly a tragic time in the history of the Church.

The congregation of Thyatira was given the description of Christ as He "who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass." It indicated that Jesus saw right

through them and stood in judgment. He said that He knew their works, love, service, faith and patience, but then emphasized their last works to be more important than their first works. In other words, what they were now doing outweighed what they used to do. He accused them of allowing that woman Jezebel, to be their teacher. If you remember, Jezebel, the wicked wife of King Ahab, had taught the people to worship the false god Baal. She taught sexual immorality. She claimed to be a prophetess herself. In the end, just as had been prophesied, she was thrown from a second story window dying on the street below. Dogs had come and torn her apart.

But her teaching lived on. The congregation of Thyatira, though they would most likely have denied it, had accepted her teaching, and was even allowing her to be a recognized teacher (or at least those who held to her doctrine). They are told that God would cast her into a bed of sickness and those committing adultery with her into great tribulation unless they repented. They were further told that her children (or followers) would be killed with death (this could only mean the second eternal death), and all the congregations would know that He was the one who searches the mind and the heart – in other words, He knew their hidden acts and unrevealed thoughts. Each one would be rewarded according to his works. We know from the New Testament that salvation is not by works but by grace. However, this compromising congregation was going by works and judging by works and so they would be rewarded and judged.

Still, in this corrupt period of Church history, there were those who held true in their faith. They were told that no other burden than what they had to endure from their own people would be put upon them. They were told that if they kept His works, and held fast to His name until He came, that they would become rulers of the nations which would be dashed into pieces. They were also told that God had given Him the morning star and He would in turn give it to them. The morning star spoke of the beginning of a new day. A new day would indeed come.

### **THE CHURCH AT SARDIS (Revelation 3:1-6)**

The terrible period of compromise led to the next period of Church history in which it seemed the true Church would finally die. We call it the dark ages. The corrupt Church ruled not only in Rome, but in France, Germany, and England. It was during this time the Crusades took place – A religious war between so called European Christians and the barbaric people of the Mid-East who had taken over Jerusalem. It was considered a holy war to reclaim the city of God. Many lost their lives on both sides during this period of time. Christianity was all but lost and buried beneath the satanic teachings of the corrupt religious leaders.

But the true Church established by Jesus Christ Himself would not die. Even during that period there was a remnant that held to the truth. Once again persecution of Christians began, this time not from a barbaric Roman government but from the supposed Church itself. Those not holding to the values of these false religious rulers were tortured in order to get them to recant, and pledge their allegiance to the Church. If they didn't,

they suffered horrible deaths from the very ones who were supposed to be worshippers of God.

In this letter Jesus is described as “He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.” Remember, the Bible identified this as the true Church. God never lost control of the true Church; those purporting to be her leaders were really on the seat of Satan. Jesus never lost control.

He told them that He knew their works, and that they had a name, and that they were alive but also dead. They were literally walking dead men. The Spirit of Christ was not found in them. Their works were found to be far from perfect before God. They were told to remember what they had first received and what they heard, to hold fast to those things, and repent. If they didn’t then they were told that He would come upon them as a thief. They wouldn’t know the hour that He would come upon them, so they would be taken before they had a chance to know what had hit them.

Jesus then spoke to the remnant that had not corrupted themselves in these dark times. These were promised to walk with the Lord in white. They were further told that overcomers would be clothed in white, signifying their purity, and that their names would not be blotted out from the Book of Life. He would confess their names before Father God and the Heavenly host, defending them as true believers.

Not much more can be said of this period in Church history because of its obscurity. It was a time of death in the name of Christ. Darkness is always significant of the devil. During this time, it seemed the devil had succeeded in taking over the Church. But as we have said, God will always have His remnant, and they will prevail.

### **THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA (Revelation 3:7-13)**

He lived between 1483 and 1546 AD. Martin Luther, the German priest, was considered to be the first representative of the Reformation – the period of time during which God would re-establish His Church. Though Martin Luther was not perfect, he did understand that what the established Church was teaching and how it was leading the people was not truly what the Bible taught. His act of crawling up the stairway to the church and nailing his 95 theses to the door represented the time when men were through following their pagan and false teachings and were returning to what God had given us in His word.

After Luther many, not only in Germany, but also in other European countries, caught the vision of the truth. They began interpreting the Bible in the common language so that all could have access to the Word of God for themselves. No longer would they have to depend upon the false interpretations of the Priests. They would have the opportunity to know for themselves.

With the invention of the Guttenberg Printing Press, the first book ever to appear in print was the Bible. This sparked the fire of the vision of making the Bible available to

all people. A careful reading of Foxes Book of Martyrs will reveal the results. Great men and women whose only crime was interpreting the Bible from Latin into the common language, were persecuted and executed. Their quest to bring the Word to every man was paid for in blood.

As a result, the Protestant Movement was born. It was never meant to be splintered the way it is today but the original cause was just and needed. The greatest fear now was not in persecution by pagans, angry because their false deities were being disclaimed for the One True God, but the greatest persecution came from those who claimed the very name of Jesus Christ. Yet the movement could not be stopped. Great revivals broke out as a result and many fled Europe for the New Land of America.

This marked the beginning of the revival era. Missions were reborn and the Church was delivered from the Dark Ages. This age of the Church was not reprimanded for their faults. Instead, they were commended because they had a “little strength, had kept Christ’s word, and had not denied His name.” The promise was two-fold: First they were told that He would make those of the synagogue of Satan (the false church) to fall before them and worship at their feet. Secondly, they were promised deliverance from the hour of trial – the time when God would pour out His wrath upon the world.

He stated, *“Look, I am coming quickly. Hold tightly to what you have and let no man rob you of your crown. Those overcoming will be made pillars in the Temple of God and they shall never leave. I will write on you the name of God, the name of the city of God (New Jerusalem), and My own new name”* (paraphrased from Revelation 3:11-12). He was saying that those who would not give in to the world system and the temptation to compromise, but held tightly to the Gospel truth would be made strong pillars, holding up the very Temple of God where they will ever be. They will be sealed by the great name of God, be given citizenship to the city of God, the New Jerusalem, and labeled with the very secret name – representing His own authority – of Jesus Christ.

This age continues even today, despite the threats and accusations from the last-days false church that we will discuss next. It is made up of all those from every walk of life, every race found upon the Earth, and from every denomination. This statement does not mean that the denominations are justified and right, but only that people from them have sealed themselves as believers in Jesus Christ, will hold true to the Word of God, and despite what man may say or teach next, will hold to this truth. This is the age that will be saved by the blood of the Lamb and will take part in the reaping of believers – God’s one true Church, when He returns to claim His redeemed creation.

## **THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA (Revelation 3:14-22)**

The letter to the Laodiceans marks the last age in Church history. Personally, I believe strongly, because of the signs of the times, and the application of this letter to our present age, that we are now living in this last time. As previously stated, the life has not

left the Church because there are still many who are actually a part of the Philadelphian age living simultaneously with those of Laodicea.

So, what are the signs of the Laodicean age? We only have to read the letter as found in Revelation 3:14-22 to identify it. Christ identifies this age as being lukewarm – neither cold nor hot. He further says that He wished they were one way or the other. This is because if they are cold, then there is opportunity for them to be won back. If they are hot, they would actually be a part of Philadelphia. But because they are lukewarm it is to our Lord as it would be to us, like taking a drink of lukewarm water. It doesn't feel good in our mouths. It nearly causes a sickening feeling in our stomachs and all we want to do is to spit it out. That's exactly what Jesus said – He would spew, or vomit it, from His mouth. He wants no part of it.

This is the time Jesus spoke of specifically when He gave the parable of the tares Matthew 13. The tares so completely resembled the corn (or wheat) that the plantation owner ordered that neither was to be disturbed until the crop was grown. Then they could readily be identified and the tares could be weeded out. Until then, to protect the good crop, they were to be left to grow together.

This is where we are in Church history right now. Those who are actually members of Philadelphia are growing alongside those from Laodicea. Because the two groups can be found in nearly every congregation across the world to pluck up the tares could result in uprooting the good crop as well. That's why it seems that God allows corruption in the Church to continue at this time. We see it all around us. There is corruption in church government. There are people whose only desire is to line their pockets and get rich from the Gospel. Worship in many cases has been replaced with a show. Now let's be careful here. I firmly believe that we should utilize every available tool to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Modern inventions, the arts, music and dance can, and is being used to bring people into the Kingdom of God. I am not against using every legitimate and moral tool for the good of Jesus Christ.

The problem lies in when we focus more on the tools and the technology than we do on the mission at hand. It is happening. Worship is not enhanced by these things but is actually being replaced by them. There is a dangerous line being crossed and when it is, then people are entertained but not drawn to God.

True worship must be defined. Worship is not music or the arts. Worship is transacted when we realize the great Deity of God, how we are totally unworthy aside from Christ to stand before Him, and we fall down before Him in our spirits, yield ourselves to Him thus connecting our spirits with the very Spirit of God. It is not simply reading the Bible, or going through a liturgy. It is not a product of emotionalism. It is a connection of our spirit with the Spirit of God.

Worship can be enhanced by music and the arts. It can be induced by the reading of God's Word; a liturgy can bring us to the point that we connect with God in worship. These things are merely tools to condition our hearts for worship. But they are not actually



worship. Our emotions can be deeply affected as we come to the point of true worship. But our emotions are not worship. Particularly in the Pentecostal Movement, emotionalism has been interpreted as worship or anointing. As stated, we are emotional creations. Frankly, in some way I'm not sure that it is possible for us to connect with God and not become emotional in some form. But the danger occurs when we interpret those expressing more emotion as being closer to God, more anointed by God, or somehow more spiritual, than those who by nature are more reserved in their emotion.

Music, the arts, dance, and emotionalism, though all can be very fruitful in putting us in an atmosphere of worship, are very dangerous when they become replacements for worship. This replacement for worship is a certain sign of Laodicea.

Stretching the truth of the Bible is another sign of the Laodicean Age. When we take the Bible out of context, changing the meaning of Scripture to fit what we want to believe, then we are treading on dangerous ground. Many have fought modern interpretations of the Bible claiming that it is changing the Word of God. Indeed, sometimes that has occurred. While I am all for correctly interpreting the Bible to fit the modern language in order that people can understand, at the same time I am very concerned by the great number of interpretations we are experiencing today. I fear that men are using interpretation for monetary gain. If we have a good modern language interpretation, why make more? We should only need a new interpretation when the vernacular of the language into which it is being interpreted has changed enough that words have taken on new and different meanings. It is yet another sign of Laodicea.

As I said in the section on Philadelphia, our modern organization is still another sign of Laodicea. The Protestant Movement was necessary because those ruling over the Church would not repent of their evil in controlling people and using them for personal gain. But very few of the further divisions were necessary. In studying our modern divisions, organizations, and denominations, in nearly every case the group was formed because people could not agree on one doctrine or another. In other cases, it was because of disagreements over structure, property, or the way the Church should be governed. Instead of working out the problems as our Lord directed, it was easier to just splinter off and start a new group. Today, thousands of denominations and organizations are in existence because of these disagreements. In the small town in which I live we have a multitude of different congregations. I have always stated that if everyone in the town would attend a congregation that we don't have enough buildings to accommodate everyone. But the truth of the matter is that a great percentage doesn't attend a congregation, and another high percent attend services out of town. In most cases these groups have not cropped up out of need, but out of disagreement. They didn't see eye to eye, so they frankly got mad and started their own group.

When a large group of people get together there is need for some organization and government. This is spoken about in the Bible, so don't get me wrong; I'm not purporting that we do away with all church government and organization, but only that we have once again gone too far. Rather, according to the law of love as given by Jesus in the Book of John (remember this is the one trait of the believer that shows the world we

are Christians), we should work out our differences. We should agree to disagree if we can't work them out and go on loving our brother and sister anyway and despite differences. This is the Biblical way.

The only legitimate split of a congregation takes place when a group has grown too large to effectively minister to the congregants and it forms two smaller groups to better serve, minister and win souls to the Lord. Any other split is not an act of love.

Our divisions have caused great confusion. People who may be seeking God continually ask, "Which group is right? Who should I believe? What should I believe?" It has opened the door for the devil to work from within the very Church which is supposed to stand against him. It is another sign of Laodicea.

Ownership of property has become a detriment as well. I realize that many, many groups will think differently of this, and they have their right. While the Bible is silent on this subject, a careful examination of the Church in the Book of Acts will reveal that they did not own property. Rather small congregations met in the homes of others. This is proven in the beginning of Acts where we are told that the apostles went house to house, breaking bread. The Church had grown rapidly in only a matter of days. There was no structure big enough for such a large group of people. Persecution from the Jews forbade that they could even hope to have a place where they could all congregate together. So, they formed small house cells. They were not separate denominations each striving to get more people into their group than the others, but they were all small parts of the same Church.

I know that we are comfortable in our buildings. Much has been accomplished in the Kingdom of God because people have come together. But because of the difficulties of ownership in many cases the Church has become a big business, building structures, purchasing equipment and so on. While I am not saying that we should sell everything and go back to the house cell system, I also long for a simpler time when the Church would not be burdened with finances, and the problems that accompany ownership. Think of the freedom pastors would have if they didn't have to spend so much time with ownership woes. Think of all the money that would be freed up to actually use in spreading the Gospel if we didn't have to make building payments, pay for utilities and so on and so forth. Millions of dollars could then be used to purchase literature, send missionaries to those needing Christ, and providing for the needs of the poor and destitute. Carefully, I am suggesting that in many, many cases (while there are also many congregations who do not fall under this category) organization, ownership of property, disagreements within the Church, and a straying away from true, heartfelt worship, are all signs of the Laodicean Age.

In addition, the emphasis on money is also a sign. In the world in which we live, without doubt it takes money to run an organization. But the wealth and prosperity movement of the seventies and eighties is still being taught today. God wants to bless His people. As a byproduct of serving God there is a degree of prosperity that accompanies it. But way too many are teaching that we serve God for the soul purpose

of prosperity. To them, it has become the most important thing. It seems that it's all about what we can get from God. Our Lord does want good things for His people. But this is not the primary emphasis as is being taught by so many. Often the only ones prospering in such movements are its pastors and teachers. In my estimation this is nothing short of robbing God by robbing His people and it too is a sign of the Laodicean Age.

Of this age our Lord accuses them of saying that they are rich and are in need of nothing. They have taken true and genuine faith out of the picture. They don't need to rely on Christ because they have made their own way. They are organized. They are accepted in the world of finance. They have millions of dollars pouring into their coffers. But in reality, Jesus says that they don't even see that they are actually wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. He is speaking of the spirit. They may have all the worldly goods they need with a great following behind them, but in the spirit, they are in poverty and are making their followers children of spiritual poverty.

A great passage of scripture that has often been used as an invitation to the lost, is actually speaking of the Church herself. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus said, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me."* The day I realized that, in its proper context, Jesus wasn't talking to sinners but to His own Church, was a day I sat back in horror and shock. He was not talking to the lost, even though He does desire the lost to open the door to Him. He was talking to the church of Laodicea. He was telling them that they had locked Him out of His own church. He stands at the door knocking, hoping that they will repent, open the door to Him and allow Him to restore fellowship with them.

We are living in this age. We must make a choice, regardless our denominational membership, what congregation you attend, or what you believe, to come out of Laodicea and be restored to Philadelphia, for the sake of your own soul.

## Chapter 7

# THE VISION OF HEAVEN

*“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’”*

*(Revelation 4:1)*

*T*here is no greater place for a human creature to be than before the throne of God. It has become a common almost coined phrase for Christians, describing the state of a deceased loved one, to say that they are before the throne of God. In this world we cannot possibly imagine how glorious it will be to stand in this coveted place.

Revelation 4 begins with a description of events taking place before the throne of God. John has been caught up to the most coveted place in existence anywhere and anytime. A meeting in Heaven was taking place that was preparation for what was about to happen next and John had been invited there to witness this event. I believe that we are so close to the time when these things will happen that this meeting could be occurring right now. John found himself standing in the throne room of Heaven and One was sitting on the throne.

Here's the scene: Around the throne are twenty-four elders, sitting wearing white robes with golden crowns atop their heads. From the throne issued lighting streaks, thunder, and voices. Seven lamps are burning in front of the throne and the Bible readily identifies these as the seven Spirits of God. The vast floor of the throne room is described as a sea of crystal glass. In the midst and around the throne are four living creatures having multiple eyes in front and back. The first creature is described as resembling a lion, the second a calf; the third has the face of a man, and the fourth is like a flying eagle. All four of these living creatures have six wings and we are again told that they are full of eyes around them and within them. They do not rest, or sleep but day and night are in their place glorifying God. They say, *"Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come"* (Revelation 4:8). We are then told that whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to the One sitting on the throne in this manner that the twenty-four elders fall down before Him, worship Him who is eternal, throw their crowns before the throne and say, *"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive honor, and glory, and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created"* (Revelation 4:11).

So quickly, in review, chapter four records the vision of John taken into Heaven where he witnesses the systematic praise of the twenty-four elders and four living creatures. We will attempt to identify these characters in the throne room scene without the aid of spiritualization. First, the twenty-four elders are only found in the Book of Revelation so there are no other cross references with which to identify them. I can only

offer my best Biblical-educated guess, so don't take this as "gospel." In my opinion the number is twenty-four representing both the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve Apostles. If this is the case then the elders represent God's people, made up of both His chosen race (Israel) and the Church. It does not mean that the Church has been raptured into Heaven but that those who have died and gone before are there. Again, this is my opinion. Some believe them to be representative of the angelic body in Heaven. Either could be true. The fact is that they are there before the throne of God. Besides in Revelation 4 and 5, they are only mentioned five more times, in Revelation 7:11, 13, 11:16, 14:3 and 19:4. The only place they are not worshipping the One on the throne occurs in 7:13 where they asked John the questions, "What are these arrayed in white robes and where did they come from?" We will discuss the answers to these questions later.

## **THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD**

Up until now we have not dealt with the seven Spirits of God. This phrase appears only four times in the Bible, again, all in the Book of Revelation. Revelation 1:4 tells us that these seven Spirits of God are before the throne. In Revelation 3:1 the letter to the Church at Sardis is addressed from "He who has the seven Spirits of God." Then here in Revelation 4:5, the seven Spirits of God are identified as being the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne. Finally, in Revelation 5, the Seven Spirits of God are identified as the seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb. Once again, without spiritualizing it is difficult to tell what is meant by this phrase.

In the New Testament, all but a couple of times the Greek word "Pneuma" is interpreted as "spirit." The other two times the word "Phantasma" is used referring to ghosts. This word "pneuma" most often refers to "The Spirit of God" or "The spirit of man." But it is also used as the "spirit" of something else, for instance, truth, slumber, word, meekness, faith, wisdom, grace, glory, error and anti-christ. It is also used in saying "the spirit that now works through the children of disobedience" and "a quiet spirit." In all these cases the same word is used. So, it not only refers to the Spirit of God and the human spirit but also the attitude or character of something else. Once again, I'm giving you my opinion. I believe that the seven spirits of God refer to the seven dispensations, or the "ages" in which God dealt with man beginning with the time of innocence when Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, right up until the time of eternal bliss when everything has been said and done and we are ever with the Lord. It isn't seven spirits like the human spirit or the Spirit of God but seven airs, or attitudes – ways God was dealing with us. These were teaching times, all different, and all leading up to the fact that we must have Christ as our Savior. These times reflect both how God dealt with man and how man failed God. They were different ways wherein the Holy Spirit worked to show us that our morality, government, law, and conscience cannot be relied on to bring us back to God.

## THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

Then we have the four living creatures. These creatures are also described in Ezekiel 1:4-10 and Ezekiel 10:1-20. There they are identified as Cherubim. These angelic beings are first seen in the Book of Genesis. The Bible tells us that they were placed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned. Their purpose was to guard the entrance so that none could enter. From this we may reason that they are special angels used for various tasks by the Great Jehovah.

We are never told what happened to Eden. Some have assumed that it was translated to Heaven because later in the Book of Revelation we see the tree of life growing there. But we can only make assumptions because it is a tidbit of information God chose to keep from us. It would make sense though, because if these Cherubim were assigned guardianship of the Garden of Eden and the garden had been translated into Heaven, then there would no longer be a need for them to guard it. This is all opinion, again because we have no scripture to back it up.

Perhaps there are more than four cherubim. We are not told. Whatever the truth may be the fact is that four of them are before God's throne ever praising Him by saying, *"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"* (Revelation 4:8).

## THE ONE SITTING ON THE THRONE

The One sitting on the throne is compared to two precious stones; first the jasper which is an opaque type of quartz that can be red, yellow or brown in color, the second a sardius which is chalcedony quartz that is a translucent or milky transparent stone ranging in color from a deep orange to a brownish red. This is how His appearance is described so I'm thinking that it means that His skin had a transparent to translucent character similar to these stones. John also said that there was a rainbow around the throne that resembled the same shade of green as an emerald. Again, we are not going to try to spiritualize these things by saying they mean this or that. Let's just try to get the picture in our mind as John described it.

Once more in summary we have One sitting on the throne whose skin is transparent or translucent, shaded in the colors mentioned above. A greenish rainbow sits around the throne. The four Cherubim continually worship Him with the words, *"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come."* When they do, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him in worship, cast their crowns before the throne saying, *"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."* What a picture! What a time of praise and worship! What glory is there!

## THE SEVEN-SEALED SCROLL

Chapter five describes a very important occurrence that begins the events of the rest of the Book of revelation. It is the passing of the seven-sealed scroll. In order to

understand the significance of the passing of this scroll we need to understand the laws of redemption God gave to Moses for the governing of Israel. This law was a type of the very act of the redemption ceremony as found in Revelation 5.

In Leviticus 25 we read about the provision of redemption God gave to Moses. It was established so that no family in Israel would ever lose their inheritance forever. If they got into a tough spot and had to sell their land, provision was made so that a near relative could purchase it back, or redeem it, or if not, certainly when the Year of Jubilee came (every fifty years) the possession would be returned to the original owner. This was a type of what God intended to do through Jesus Christ in buying back what the devil tricked man into selling. Basically, whatever the creditor had paid for the land could be returned and the land would once again be part of the family's inheritance.

Over the centuries, even though the practice was unchanged, the proof of the redemption took on several forms depending upon the customs of the times. When Boaz redeemed the land of Naomi and Ruth (in Ruth 4) after he had paid the money, it was made legal by the witness of other property owners in town and sealed by giving his shoe to the creditor. By the days of Jeremiah, a type of paper contract had been put into place. We read in Jeremiah 32 that after he had paid the money for the redemption of land, contracts were signed, first an open contract that described the details of the transaction and secondly a copy was sealed.

Later, in Jewish history, this practice was modified so that the contract was written on both sides then sealed. By this method one could read the details of the contract that was sealed on the inside because they were also plainly written on the outside.

With this in mind we go back to the scene in Heaven. The One sitting on the throne held a seven-sealed scroll written on the inside and on the back. It is clearly the articles of redemption, not only for mankind but for the entire world. It contained the conditions for reversing man's sell-out to the devil and the price that had to be paid in order to fulfill the redemption contract.

As outlined in the laws of redemption under the Mosaic covenant, the first condition was that the redeemer must be a near relative. God became man in Jesus Christ and so established the blood relationship as a near relative to man. Secondly, He had to pay the price. The price for redemption was the sacrifice of a sinless human being. Before Christ, none could be found. Jesus not only fulfilled the requirement as a near relative by becoming a man, but also lived a sinless life. He did not inherit man's sin because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. He was born without sin. But He had to continue this sinless state, and He did. He became the first man to ever qualify as the Redeemer of the world. That's why the devil tried so hard to tempt Him after He had fasted. He not only offered the Lord food and assurance of His role, but also control of all the kingdoms of the Earth. The first two temptations were only lead-ins to his real purpose. If he could get Jesus to see that he would give Him control of what he had purchased from Adam without having to die on the cross, then he would have also been successful in tempting our Lord to sin. It didn't work.



This is also why Jesus labored so much in prayer in Gethsemane just before His crucifixion – to the point that His sweat became like great drops of blood. As God, He knew what He was preparing to suffer. If there was a way, “let this cup pass from Me,” He said. But there was no other way, and our Lord fulfilled the contract. He died on Calvary as a man but arose the third day as the Son of God. He paid the price as the only One who could ever redeem us.

All that remains is for Him to take possession of the contract and read it. That is what is getting ready to happen in Revelation 5. First, we hear a strong angel crying out in a loud voice, “*Who is worthy to open the scroll and loose its seals?*” (Revelation 5:2). Time was allowed. Not one angel, not one elder, or John himself could step forward and answer that call. It was extremely important that someone be able to receive the scroll. On it rested the right of existence of the entire world, mankind, and all of God’s creation that had been a part of the curse the Mighty Jehovah had been forced to issue when Adam and Eve sinned in Eden, thus giving the rights to God’s creation to the devil.

When no one immediately stepped forward John began to weep. He somehow realized the great importance of this moment. With no one stepping forward it meant that all were doomed to everlasting destruction. Not only was no one found worthy to open the scroll but not one was even able to look at it – to read what was written on the outside.

It was then that one of the elders spoke to John and said, “*Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals*” (Revelation 5:5). What a moment! What a victory! What a time of hope! It was the answer to the groans and travails of all of creation as spoken of in Romans 8:22.

John looked because he wanted to see the hope this elder had told him about. Fully expecting to see a powerful, lion-like figure, in the middle of this glorious, holy scene in Heaven, the magnificent throne, the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures, stood a lamb that looked as if it had been slain – Not a powerful lion but a lamb and one that had been wounded to death. Folks, this can be none other than Jesus Christ, the one John the Baptist had described – “*The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29). He is further described as having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God. If I am right about these Seven Spirits being the seven dispensations, then what this passage is telling us is that He holds the leadership of all time. A horn is clearly identified throughout the Bible as signifying a king, a leader, or one of power. The seven horns represent the leadership of all ages. The seven eyes linked with the seven horns can only mean that He sees all the problems of each of those dispensations and He is the answer to them all. These seven spirits are sent out into all the world. Our Lion-Lamb is the fulfillment and the solution to each age and to all of creation! How exciting to know that finally, the fulfillment of our redemption is about to take place!

We read, *“Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.”* (Revelation 5:7). He is worthy and He has taken possession of what He has paid for. There is no struggle from Him who sits on the throne (God Himself) because our redeemer has paid the price and He is worthy.

The most magnificent worship service ever to be, erupts in that great throne room of Heaven. After taking possession of the scroll the twenty-four elders fall down in worship of Him. Each is described as having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, and we are told that they are the prayers of the saints. Their cries for redemption have been answered! A new song is sung around the throne: *“You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”* (Revelation 5:9-10). Next came the voice of many angels, the number is countless because John says, ten thousand times ten thousand plus thousands of thousands. With a loud voice they say, *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”* (Revelation 5:12). Next John tells us that every creature, in Heaven, on the Earth, under the Earth and in the sea, said, *“Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!”* (Revelation 5:13). Finally, the four living creatures say, *“Amen!”* – This is the final word and the so be it of all! At that, the twenty-four elders again fall down and worship Him who lives forever and ever.

# **THINGS THAT SHALL BE**

## ***THE FIRST WITNESS***

## Chapter 8

# THE FIRST SIX SEALS

*“Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, ‘Come and see.’”  
(Revelation 6:1)*

*Listen* closely ... can you hear them? I remember in the old westerns how that both cowboys and Indians would bow themselves low to the ground, press their ear to the earth and listen. When they would get back up, they would give their report to the others that men were coming. Sometimes they would even give an estimate as to how many. They could supposedly tell this from the pounding of the hooves of the approaching horses as they picked up the rumbling noise that vibrated in the ground.

So, we spiritually bow towards the earth, place our ear to the ground and listen. When we do, we can also hear the pounding of approaching horses. As I read the word of God and look around at all that is taking place in our world today, it sounds like the horses are coming. God, through the prophets, and our Lord, Jesus Christ, foretold us of things that would be happening to warn us of their coming.

For a great many years, men and women have looked at current events as signs. And, for the most part, they have been right to do so. Habitually we have dismissed them as perhaps some have gotten their facts wrong. Their warnings of imminent danger may not have come to pass as predicted and because of it, mankind has dismissed it as yet another false report. But have they been completely wrong? I think not.

A great and terrible earthquake takes place and the predictions of the coming of the Lord begin. But nothing seems to happen and we let it slide by. A volcano erupts and the prophecies start again. Nothing happens and it is again dismissed. Nearly every time a tragedy takes place, whether earthquake, flood, hurricane, fire, or whatever there are those who once again warn of the coming of our Savior. But it seems nothing happens.

Mockers and doubters will tell us that there is nothing to be alarmed about. It is nature doing its thing and we shouldn't be afraid. They quote tragic events one after another as proof that the warnings are false and we shouldn't be concerned. And so, life continues.

To a degree they are right. These things have been happening since recorded time. But we must remember that from the beginning it wasn't meant to be this way. When God created the heavens and the earth, placed the splendid Garden of Eden in the middle of it all, created all life forms and then put man and woman right in the thick of it

all, it was meant to be a perfect world. God was in control (and really, He still is). There was no such thing as a wild animal. There was no death, no hatred, or struggle for survival. Harmony permeated life's existence.

Man messed it all up. His original sin is what threw things out of order. As a result, both plant life and animal life became wild, untamed and dangerous. Existence became a struggle and the fight to survive was birthed. God was forced by man's action to curse not only human life, but all of creation, including nature. Because of sin the order did become the survival of the fittest. Both man and animal killed to eat. Death became the order of things. Animals had to die in order to clothe us, feed us, and entertain us in sport. So, they became terrified of the human creature.

In order to grow fruit and vegetables man had to fight the earth to keep it from producing thorny plants, thistles and poisonous weeds. The serpent grew its fangs and the struggle began. The ground would shake periodically warning us that one day it would get us.

But worst of all, men battled each other for control. They wanted to have the most land, the largest dungeon of slaves or the greatest pile of wealth. And so, they fought. Wars took place as the struggle continued - And still does. We may fight to gain freedom and in some cases this has been unavoidable. More often than not there have been underlying reasons – Reasons that the common man knows nothing about. Powers struggle and they use others like pawns in a game of chess as they sit in their comfortable chairs and let others do their dirty work all in the name of patriotism and freedom.

Despite the struggle God provided a way of escape. He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, as the sacrifice that would reverse the greatest tragedy that has ever fallen on the earth. His provision can reverse the upheaval caused by man's sin. It requires a personal sacrifice on our part. We must acknowledge Him as our Savior and allow Him to be formed in us by way of the Holy Spirit who is at work in the earth today.

In the ranks of those who have accepted His provision are those with their ears to the ground. They have studied the ancient writings that have come from God by way of the hand of man. We call it the Bible – and it is the Word of God. Because men didn't want to give up their power and control over others, God's prophets and teachers have been historically persecuted, imprisoned and executed sometimes cruelly and torturously only because they warned of the approaching horses. Evil does not want God to win. The satanic influence in mankind doesn't want things to change. And so, they attempt to silence the voice of warning.

Yet when one is quieted, two take his or her place. Man cannot silence the voice of God. Despite what we deserve, God continues to love us, speak out to us, and warn us of what is coming. Whether we choose to listen or refuse to do so, does not alter to approaching hooves that thunder against the ground.

Even though some have added to the prediction erroneously (some by mistake and others purposely) and their predictions have been proven wrong, it does not change the fact that signs are happening. They have been happening for centuries but never more frequently than our present age. The world is changing regardless what we may want to think. We are told that these tragedies are greater today only because the population has increased. Why does that make a difference? Could that not be a part of making the cataclysmic events more horrible? Of course it is. God knew that. In fact, He foreknew that. Volcanoes are erupting. The earth is shaking. Despite their debate the world is warming up (we call it Global Warming). It is changing and getting itself in place for the approaching horsemen. The Bible does tell us that the seasons will not stop but will continue until the end of time and while this is true it does not mean that their change will not come with greater, more terrifying force.

We call it "El Nino," "Global Warming," and other official sounding names. It seems to make it more tolerable I suppose. When we have an official name for it, somehow it feels like we know it's coming and we have some control. But call it what we may, it is a signal of what God has already told us.

In Revelation chapter 6 we see Jesus – The Lion of Judah, the Lamb as if He had been slain, standing, holding the seven-sealed scroll that is the title deed to what God gave to man and man foolishly sold to the devil in exchange for the knowledge of good and evil. He had paid the price to hold it and to open it. He had given sufficient time for repentance and accept His provision. It was time to remove the seals, read the contract and take possession of what man had lost.

While I believe firmly that we as Christians should have victory, peace, joy and happiness in Jesus Christ, I also firmly believe that over the centuries and ages past, those cataclysmic events and disasters have struck terror in the hearts of men and have produced death, becoming the echoes of the seals beginning to be torn from the scroll.

Scoffers continue to do their thing. They will produce doubt, tell lies and attempt to discredit those who are sounding the warning cries. Let them do their vicious duty for, unbeknown to them, their very acts are also part of the warning. Their persecution has also been predicted and they have fallen right in line to help fulfill the plan of God. Even the devil, with his wicked lies and evil influence, is but a pawn in the plan of God. Throw down this book and dismiss it if you wish, but know that it will change nothing. It will not make one simple truth to become a lie. The world can kill the prophets but ten will arise in the place of each because God will not be mocked and no invention, no weapon of mass destruction and no war of man or devil can stop His divine plan. It will happen just as He has told us. Let God be true and every man a liar. These things are happening and will continue to happen until the time has come.

The horses are sort of a preview of the unfolding events of the Revelation. God said that everything should be established by two or three witnesses. With the preview we have three witnesses. So, let's begin the journey.



## THE FIRST SEAL – THE WHITE HORSE

The white horse: Symbol of peace, justice and freedom for all. Over the centuries many have made an attempt to ride this horse. None to date have succeeded to stay in the saddle for very long. All of those who have made their attempt to mount this majestic steed have done so with an important sounding mission in mind. They talk of world unification, peace to all mankind, a war to end all wars, freedom for those enslaved and liberty to all.

Nimrod was the first on record. We are told little of him in the Bible but those few verses reveal a great deal. Genesis 10:8-12 paint his portrait. There are only two other mentions of him in the Bible, one in 1 Chronicles, which is a genealogical listing, and the other in the book of Micah where his name is represented as the Assyrian nation. Here is the account of his existence: *“Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.’ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).”*

On the surface it may sound as if he was a good man and I’m sure that he gave that appearance in order to influence people. The Hebrew word rendered “mighty” is also rendered “masterful.” He had great power to influence people and because of it he was a leader. He was nicknamed “A mighty hunter before the LORD,” and in the literal translation it meant “he became a masterful hunter to the faces of Yahweh.” This was not a compliment because, reading between the lines, he defied God. The Bible lists the cities that he built and established. All of them were mainline cities of the nation of Assyria which became an enemy nation hundreds of years later and was a thorn in the side of Israel. Today several Arabic nations make up the old Assyrian Empire and continue to plague Israel.

But the key city was the first: Babel. It was under the leadership of Nimrod. His name is not mentioned in the Genesis 11 account of the Tower of Babel but I believe that he was instrumental in this rebellion because the chapter begins by saying that they journeyed east and settled in a plain in the land of Shinar. Also, according to the account the city was not named “Babel” until after the confusion of languages took place. If this is true then Nimrod had to be the leader of this group of people.

In a nutshell, the story tells us that the leadership of these people, to keep from experiencing another flood because of their sinful rebellion against God, proclaimed that they were going to build a tower that would reach all the way up to the heavens. Apparently, they were making great progress because we are told that God came down to see the city and tower that they were building. God said, *“Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.”* (Genesis 11:6). It was a defiant act because

they were doing this in spite of God. If He decided to destroy life on earth again by way of a great flood, they would climb their tower to safety.

In order to stop them God miraculously confused their speech. He cut off communications and they could not complete the work because they didn't understand each other. Here's what the Bible says, *"Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth."* (Genesis 11:7-9). He made them to speak different languages and physically scattered them over the earth. The physical scattering took place during the days of Peleg (see Genesis 10:25). The Bible says, *"To Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided..."* The original Hebrew language indicates a physical division and I believe that was the dividing of the continents. We aren't told how but God caused the one large land mass to divide into our present-day continents. It's interesting because if you look closely at a world map you can begin to see how the great land masses could be put together like a gigantic jig-saw puzzle (taking into account soil erosion over the centuries).

The point is that Nimrod attempted to mount the white horse in defiance of God and in effort to rule the world. He did not succeed because God had a plan and there could only be one true rider of the white horse.

Down through the ages many have attempted to ride this white horse. Those most notorious include Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. All of these great powers in their day dreamed of ruling the world. Many came close especially the Roman Empire but God thwarted every attempt. In more modern times we think of Hitler during World War II and the USSR. Both of these were attempts to ride the white horse.

Today men are still making their own attempt to mount it. There are conflicts all over the world, terrorist groups who wish to destroy democracy and rule the nations. Who will succeed? That's a good question. I cannot answer it with a name because only God really knows. But I will say this: In the mighty conflict to rid the world of terrorists, wars are being fought. Terrorists know no borders. They don't have a country that they call their own, but operate in many countries. This makes it tremendously difficult to win a war against them. We may fight one band, defeat one leg of their group and others crop up in different countries. They have representation in every country found on the globe.

After the terrorist attack on the United States, referred to as 9/11, America declared war on terrorists. After years of fighting the order was given to remove our troops, but the war was far from won. Even though we have stopped fighting, yet in the Mid-East terrorists continue their dastardly feat. For the reasons mentioned above we are not winning. How could we possibly have representation in every country in the world? How could we possibly recognize those belonging to these terrorist groups until they have committed their murderous crimes? The answer is that we can't. I served in the U.S. Army for three

years on active duty during the mid-eighties and was committed to be on call for an additional three years after that. I love the United States as much as anyone does. When the National Anthem is played, I stand at attention with my hand over my heart. But as a minister of the Gospel, I must also speak out by saying that we are engaged in a war that we cannot possibly win. We live in a time when the government of our country is out of control. Laws are being passed that continue to wear away at the freedoms we have so long enjoyed. I am concerned that the day is quickly approaching when we will not be such a prosperous nation, but a nation indebted financially to other countries – countries that hate our very existence and only tolerate us. If and when that day comes, we will be in serious trouble.

The successful rider of the white horse will have a bow – signifying weapons – in one hand and will wear a crown, and he will go forth conquering and to conquer. It will be his inspiration to be a world leader seeing to it that world peace finally is established. He will succeed where all others have failed.

Now I'm going to make my own predictions. I hope I am wrong. But if I am right, I must tell all who will read this what I feel is being prepared to take place. This conflict with the terrorist groups will result in devastating war. Fighting is going on now, but I believe it will get worse, much worse as the terrorist groups emerge in country after country.

The U.S. alone will not be able to stop them. I realize that many world powers are currently involved in fighting terrorist groups. But they have not united as they must to stop them. It will take one man with leadership abilities strong enough to lead the world in conquering the evils of these terrorist groups. He will be a person of great influence and he will have the uncanny ability to speak the words that the world wants to hear. He will gain international recognition and will be an inspiration to every country on the face of this planet.

The Bible indicates through prophecies found in Daniel and in the Book of Revelation that the old Roman Empire will be reestablished. Because of these prophecies, for many years I felt that this world leader would rise up somewhere in Europe and would have great influence among the Jewish people because the Bible also indicates that the Temple in Jerusalem would be rebuilt, and it will.

One day I was studying on this, praying and seeking the Lord as to how these end-time events would take place. Suddenly my stomach grew weak and I felt nearly faint. I was in shock because what I felt God was revealing to me struck me with awe and horror. The good old U.S. of A. has always been a symbol of religious freedom and great missionary efforts. We have taken on the role of evangelizing the world. But suddenly I had an overwhelming feeling that this world power was going to arise from within our own country. He would have great influence over people. He would have the uncanny ability to sway others with his words. He would talk of peace, freedom and democracy for the entire world. The U.S. is the closest ally with the nation of Israel so this man would be readily accepted by the Jewish people.

I won't even pretend to understand the politics of the United Nations, but somehow this man will become the leader of this group or a similar group and power will be given to him in effort to finally stop and stamp out terrorism. I believe that he will succeed but will also emerge from the conflict as the world leader with great influence. He will reorganize the Roman Empire but most likely under a different name.

He will be the Anti-christ of which the Bible so often speaks. He will go forth on the white horse with his bow in hand conquering and to conquer. It will be necessary to establish a world-wide government and to incorporate a world-wide religion. In order for it to succeed it will be mandatory to everyone in every country on earth. Those not conforming will be sought out, persecuted and executed.

There is another area that this rider of the white horse will control - The global economy. There has been a group of the most elite of the financial nations that has met since 1975. We didn't hear a lot about them until the recent financial crisis that began in the United States and has been felt around the globe. They call themselves the G-7. They are the seven wealthiest nations in the world and are comprised of The United States, Canada, Great Britain, Japan, Italy, France and Germany (it is interesting that Italy, France and Germany were all parts of the old Roman Empire). Later in the Book of Revelation we are told of such a union of seven nations from which the Beast – The Anti-christ will arise. He will control these nations. Others will join and be removed but, in the end, there will be seven. In order to control the earth, the rider of the white horse will also have to control the global economy. Watch this group closely for I fearfully believe that the Anti-christ will emerge from this group.

It doesn't sound like something we'd fall for, does it? But be careful because he will give good, plausible sounding reason that will be universally accepted. It is the beginning of the end. Watch world events. As cataclysmic disasters take place one after another, as terrorist groups continue to spread their fear each day, and as the world economy fluctuates, it will all lead up to the point when the world will have to unite in order to cope with these disasters, stop the reign of terror and balance the budgets of the nations.

What will result will be a reign of terror even worse. The world will welcome the rider of the white horse in general. However, he will become a persecutor of Christians who will oppose and stand against his evil. This is the arrival of the first horse with thundering hooves.

Remember the words of the Great Apostle, Paul, who wrote, *"For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."* (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Many cry out today for peace. Wars are fought in attempt to gain peace. The day is quickly approaching when the nations will unite in an effort to gain world peace finally and for all time. But it will only be the beginning of sorrows.

The Anti-christ is coming. I fear he is already alive on the earth but because he has not yet been identified and the evil of terrorists has not yet reached its peak, that he still remains in the shadows. But make no mistake. The Bible has always been true and it will be accurate in this respect also. Watch the news for anytime he could be revealed.

Hear the rumbling of the hooves of the white horse for he is surely coming and it will be soon. Also be prepared because only in Christ Jesus will we have the power to withstand his influence. Are you ready? If not, now is the time to make preparation. Confess Christ before you are compelled to confess the Anti-christ.

## **SEAL TWO – THE RED HORSE**

The red horse: Symbol of war and destruction, and an attitude of anger. It was a Saturday afternoon at a family reunion on my mother's side of the family. It was threatening rain and so everyone who was still outdoors immediately sought shelter. It was thundering and lightening as well and common sense told me that we should go inside away from the possibility of being struck. Yet somehow there was no fear and it was as if a small voice said, "Don't worry; everything will be okay," and so I sat down by my father where a few chairs had been set out. There was a large umbrella canopy there and we moved our chairs under it. As the rain began to fall, we sat in the dry, just my dad and I, and we talked.

I don't remember ever having a conversation quite like that one with my dad. It was an honor and a privilege to hear him talk because for the first time in my life he was talking about the war – the Korean War. I had known all along that he had been there, but had not realized the kind of action he saw and was a part of. My father told of three major battles that raged during the war namely, Bloody Ridge where 2700 UN Forces were killed and up to 15,000 North Koreans and Chinese; Heartbreak Ridge where 3700 American and French troops died and up to 25,000 North Korean and Chinese; and Pork Chop Hill where 258 UN and Americans died along with 1500 North Koreans and Chinese. I was mesmerized as he told of these conflicts. He had experienced an American soldier crawling up to him for help, where the man died at his feet before Dad could get him help. He told of lying on the ground as enemy bullets struck all around him. He spoke about a buddy who died in the night at Pork Chop Hill.

My own military experiences were petty compared to his. I was in for three years under the Reagan administration. The only thing that happened during my time was the invasion of Granada that only lasted about a month and a half. A small number of US forces were deployed there while I remained safe and secure in Washington, D.C.

War is a terrible thing. It always involves loss of life and regardless of which side suffers casualties, it is non-the-less tragic. The history of America, like that of many nations around the world, is marked by war – Times of fighting for what is right, protecting our way of life, property and loved ones. Now don't get me wrong for what I am about to write; I want to go on record as saying that I do love my country. I served for a time and although it was peaceful service for me, I could have been called upon at any time to

defend and protect. But we must realize that in most wars throughout history, whether barbarians, Romans, or Christian Crusaders, the many men and women that died were merely pawns in the hands of leaders who controlled and commanded. We are no different. If our president deems it necessary, he will send troops out to do what they have been trained to do, while they remain safe and secure in their brick and mortar fortresses. Sometimes, even though those who are putting their lives on the line are doing what they do with the attitude of patriotism, those in control have far different motives.

War leaves cities, towns and villages in heaps of rubble and turn beautiful hills, forests, and meadows barren and destitute of life. It affects people for generations to come. It often results in poverty and ruination for the innocent that must figure out how to etch out a living amidst the rubble and barrenness.

World War I was named "The War to End All Wars." It not only divided nations but resulted in the deaths of approximately 16.5 million people (which included 6.8 million civilians). It did not end all wars as was promised. Around twenty years later another world-wide war broke out – World War II which resulted in the deaths of between 62-78 million people, which includes 40-52 million civilians. After this war other conflicts have come and gone. There was the Korean War, the War of Vietnam, then the Gulf War, and in our current times, the Iraq War and the Afghanistan War. The last two wars are a part of the war on terrorism, a different kind of war. Yes, people still die. Weapons are discharged, towns and villages are destroyed. The difference is that this war can break out on any continent and in any country in the world. It is not a war with certain countries but a war between ideals. Even though the governments involved have gone to great lengths to keep it from being called a religious war, yet our adversaries insist on making it about destroying Christians and Jews. They have never been secretive about it.

This war will be very difficult to win if winning is possible at all. In all other wars a country could be defeated either by crippling them or often by eliminating their leader. While we were right to look for and bring Osama bin Laden to justice for the catastrophe of 9-11, even though he has been eliminated from the picture, the war on terror is not over because when one leader goes down another simply steps up to take his place. I fear that this war will continue. If we succeed in defeating the Taliban forces in Afghanistan, they will only crop up in another country such as Algeria or Somalia or perhaps even closer to the United States. If the truth were known I feel certain that these forces have at least a small representation in every nation on the earth. And now we have ISIS – The worst of the terrorist forces yet.

I believe that this conflict will open the door to lead into the time of the Red Horseman. Jesus said in Matthew 24:6 and Mark 13:7 that in the last days we will hear of wars and rumors of wars. These will take place before the end. However, they are leading up to the end.

When the Antichrist begins his reign of peace he will do just as all before him has done. He will use his bow (as we saw with the rider of the white horse) to wage a war to

usher in that plan of peace. As he switches his mount from the white horse to the red horse, we are told that the rider will actually take peace from the earth and to enable and influence people to kill one another and further that he is given a great sword – a powerful weapon and/or influence in the waging of this war. I believe that this war will be one to force people, governments, beliefs and ideals to merge so as to do away with their differences.

The two most powerful forms of government in today's world are those of democracy and that of communism. There was a time when most thought that the Anti-christ would rise from communism. However, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the most influential communistic government, that idea began to fade.

As the world became more and more dependent on oil for energy and with the vast supplies found in the Mid-East, they began to grow rich. Along with wealth came the desire for power and the ability to develop weapons. Now they have the ability to wage war. Most of these Arabic countries have not tried to hide their hatred for Americans, because of their designation as a Christian country, and Jews because of very long-term problems that stem all the way back to Biblical days. They are the modern-day threat. Their false religion is quickly growing and spreading throughout the world. They are now the power to fear. The Anti-christ will have to enforce compromises in order to appease Christians, Jews and Moslems.

This so-called time of peace will only come with the strictest of rules of compromise unacceptable to all three religious powers and will result in high casualties on all three fronts. There will be war like the world has never before witnessed all in the name of peace.

The truth is that real and lasting peace will never come to earth as long as the devil – The true world power behind the Anti-christ, reigns. But don't be afraid! Don't let your heart fail you for fear. The day is coming as seen later in the Book of Revelation, when the Lion of Judah, The Lamb as He had been slain – Jesus Christ, will finally open that last seal. Time as man has measured will be no more and He will stand with one foot on the land and one on the sea and finally claim His redeemed property. The devil will lose his power and false authority and will be once and for all defeated. War will be no more because the enemies of true peace will be eradicated and Christ will eternally reign!

Until that day the devil will rage war in the hearts of mankind. The finality will come in this war of the antichrist and will be followed with catastrophic results. If we are the generation that will see this take place be prepared. How? There is only one way. We may try to stockpile food and supplies. We may arm ourselves with weapons of our own. But in truth all that we do will never be enough. The only way we can be prepared is to be in tune with God the Father, His plan for us in Jesus Christ, and spend time listening to the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Whatever He tells us is the right thing. If we are alive and witness these things then we must be assured in our hearts that God's great Divine plan for our lives will be fulfilled in this too.

If this war takes our lives because of our faith then know that we will be among those who stand on that sea of glass mingled with fire and blood. If it does not then we have a further mission in which God intends to use us. Either way we can say with the great Apostle Paul, "To live is Christ; to die is gain."

The horses are coming and we cannot stop them. Still, we have hope in knowing that their arrival and devastating passage will only serve to further usher in the coming of our Master, our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of God Who lives forever more!

### **SEAL THREE – THE BLACK HORSE**

Inflation .... The high cost of living; it seems to be going up nearly every day. I know many can perhaps top my stories; still, I'd like to share a few from my own viewpoint. I remember my first job; I was a part-time bus boy in a restaurant. I worked after school about fifteen to twenty hours a week and after taxes brought home a whopping \$18.00 to \$25.00 per week. By today's standards it was nothing. But then I could get the things I wanted. When I got my license gasoline was running about thirty to thirty-five cents per gallon and in those days often a gas war would erupt and you could sometimes get it for less than thirty cents per gallon. Today thirty cents would be a good shaking off of the nozzle. I remember hearing my parents complain as the price of milk neared a dollar a gallon. Many would compare the lower wages with the lower prices but somehow it just doesn't seem the same. The ratio seems to be much different and what you got for your money seemed to be much larger proportions.

They make automobiles out of more inferior products but in turn charge much higher prices. The quantity and quality go down but still the prices soar higher and higher.

The economic crisis in 2008-2010 was blamed on housing and yes there were some things that happened there that did not help our situation but in my simplistic mind I remember that before the housing industry went soaring south the gasoline prices went up. The powers that be seemed to want to take the focus off of gasoline and direct our minds towards other things. But the fact of the matter is that gasoline went up first. That caused shipping and freight costs to go higher which in turn began an avalanche on nearly everything else. No one wanted to sacrifice profits and so in order to keep the same bottom line, prices had to go up.

The problem is that wages did not go up. In fact, jobs started getting cut. Hours at work began to go down and soon we found ourselves with a 10% unemployment rate. Now people had to make choices on what they purchased which further caused sales to go down and so once again to maintain their higher profits prices went up. But no one was buying and the super powers in the financial world scratched their heads seemingly dumbfounded as to why.

Those of us in the quickly disappearing middle class of society knew that the answer was simple; lower prices would increase sales. Now they might not have such a



large profit margin but some is better than none. It just seems like the rich in control can't understand that. To most of them it is all or none.

Even though the large oil companies insisted that they had no choice but to raise prices, still each year they report record profits. Now I may be a little foolish here but it seems to me that if you are making more money than ever before then you can afford to lower the prices to increase sales. That is obvious to me. These economic powers have a way of explaining things but, so far, the explanations that I've heard sounds like their talking out both sides of their mouths. It's nothing more than a dog and pony show.

If it continues (and I believe it will) devastating results are certain to follow. As of this writing the economy seems to be getting a little better. But I believe that it is a false hope. I'm not alone; I've heard the reports of economists that still predict a future drop that could be even more disastrous. I'm not an economist. I don't even pretend to know all the answers and it all seems overwhelming to me at times. But I do know the Word of God. I know that as these horses approach one of them will be the black horse that ushers in inflation such as the world has never witnessed.

War has a way of doing that. Because of destroyed crops, production facilities and so forth costs are certain to soar. Even the deceiving words of the Antichrist will not be able to comfort or explain the devastating economy that will come in as a result of his "peaceful war." Of course, he will come up with an explanation. And the world will believe him even though it will be nothing more than a pack of lies.

If we think the economy is bad now just wait; when this period of inflation hits the entire world will feel the pangs of it. The one crying out from the midst of the living creatures says, "*a quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius.*" These are the main ingredients for bread. The denarius in the days of John was equal to full wages for a day. So, in essence this voice was saying "a loaf of bread for a day's wages." Now think of that in our modern terms. If I have interpreted this passage correctly that means during the time of the black horse a loaf of bread would be equal to about \$60.00 to \$100.00 depending on your job and current daily wages. Bread was considered to be the common food of all people. When they couldn't eat anything else they could afford to eat bread. But not at those prices!

What we are hearing today is the thundering hooves in the distance. We think we've got it bad now, just wait. It is going to get extremely worse. When the black horse arrives it will come with an economy that will rob the world of its wealth. The commoner (which includes most of us) will be in deep trouble and full dependence on the rich and ultimately on the Anti-christ.

This economic situation will result in a famine – But a way different kind of famine than the world has ever seen. Famine means that there is a lack of food – Not enough to go around; to feed everyone. In past history this world has experienced great famines. There have been times when, because of a lack of rain, the earth has ceased from producing fruit. These famines have been localized to countries or regions of the world.

Great famines have happened and are happening still in the great continent of Africa. During these times the only solution to keep people from starving to death is to import food from countries like our own US of A where we currently have plenty.

The famine caused by the black horse is one of different proportions. It is not said that there is a lack of food. But because of exuberant prices even though the food is in great supply only the rich will be able to afford it (*don't hurt the oil and wine*). This will be a famine of resources with which to buy food. Let that one mull over in your mind for a while.

Here is what I see happening ... once again this is my speculation, not what is specifically spoken in the Word of God, so take it as you will. This is what makes sense to me. I believe that because of this great inflation caused by the war waged by the Anti-christ that a dependency on his government will become a necessity. In the United States (and other countries as well) a welfare state has developed. Many depend on food stamps or a monthly government check in order to make a living. Without these provisions many would not have the resources to have a place to live or the ability to buy food. We could spend pages talking about what is wrong with this system but for what we are trying to establish here we will stop at that.

I believe that the Anti-christ will set up a system much like our welfare system that will be considered as a charity to those who can't afford the high prices of food. In order to maintain control of the system he will devise a mark, perhaps a chip located underneath the skin of the forehead or right hand. This chip will contain all anyone would ever want to know about this individual – family history, any criminal records, any and all financial information and perhaps even tracking information. It will become a requirement not only of the poor but also of the rich and will develop into what the Bible calls “The Mark of the Beast.” We will talk more about his in subsequent chapters.

Can you see the well-laid plan of the Anti-christ? Each step will come so quietly and subtly that the average person won't know what has hit him until it is too late. Only those who have committed themselves to Jesus Christ and have studied His Word – The Bible, will be able to recognize what is happening. The rest of the world will fall right into place and in line behind the Anti-christ.

I've heard countless people who were not Christians say, “I'd never fall for that. I won't let them put that awful Mark of the Beast on my forehead or on my hand!” But folks, again it will happen in such a progressive and underlying way that those who aren't committed to Jesus Christ will just follow the progression. History tells us that. Most have already done it in other situations.

This world leader influenced and controlled by none other than the devil himself will be so charismatic, and his personality will be so magnetic that the world will flock to him as he talks of peace, brings war to control those opposed to his regime and allows the financial system to evolve into one that he controls, and people will fall for his smooth, kind words right into his evil and fatal trap.

The only way to keep from it and escape his clutches is to become a committed born-again Christian – A devoted follower of Jesus Christ. We must study the Bible to know what is coming. It is all there; it is all laid out if we will read it in its rightful context and get beyond the teaching hype of others. We can know and we can be prepared. But this is the only way. Don't be deceived by the progressive but fatal trap of the devil. Come to Christ even now and be prepared for the thundering hooves of the approaching horses.

## **SEAL FOUR – THE PALE HORSE**

Very few people in our nation of plenty have witnessed it up close; we may have seen pictures on TV or in a magazine of little children with swollen stomachs who are starving to death. Their mothers, who have sacrificed all they had in order to give the last bit of nourishment to their children, are now literally skin and bones and have only days if not hours to live. I have not seen this in person and frankly hope I never do. In a world of plenty it is ludicrous to think of someone starving to death. Yet it is happening even now in many parts of the world.

As a result of the reign of the anti-christ this will be one of the final results of his evil control over the earth. The unimaginable inflation discussed in seal three will culminate in what this removed seal outlines: death by war, hunger and the beasts of the earth.

Based on what we have suspected and written in previous chapters and on the verses following after this, the fourth part of the earth I believe will be mostly made up of Christians and those who, even though not committed to Christ, have stubbornly refused to comply with the Anti-christ and his terrible mark. Without this mark no one is permitted to make any financial transactions. No buying and no selling. No way to make a living ... no work. The only way to earn an income is to bow to the demands of this world leader.

Those who don't will be hunted and killed by the weaponry of man (the sword). The war of the Anti-christ will change and the new terrorists will become those who refuse to comply with his new way of life. He will succeed in conquering all countries on the earth. They will become mere states of his new world order and under the regime of his control and power. The terrorist groups, because of their own demonic influence, will simply fall in line and submit to this new demonic influence. They may even become officers and soldiers in his army. The new enemy is those who claim to believe in God and are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. Those stragglers who refuse to comply for other reasons will be grouped together with these Christians.

Here's the "kicker:" though we will most likely defend ourselves and our families we will not launch out attacks because of the love of Christ within us. Yet we will be mislabeled, lied about, and accused just as Christians were in the old Roman Empire prior to Constantine. These believers were treated as enemies of the state because they were hated. Tradition teaches that Nero was responsible for setting Rome on fire yet he blamed it on the Christians. The Anti-christ will operate in such a way. Anything bad that

happens will conveniently become the fault of Christians. In this way he will succeed in making the world hate Christians even more than it does now. They will be hunted down and executed simply because of their faith. The favorite way of execution by Muslims today is beheading. The Bible tells us in Revelation that many of the saints will be killed by beheading (see Revelation 20:4).

Others, because they cannot provide for themselves will literally starve to death. Think what it will be like when only those who have taken his mark can buy food. Some may try to grow their own but now think of this: Unless they would succeed in completely hiding from the forces of the Antichrist, property owners would not be able to pay their taxes and so would lose their rite of ownership. If they have a mortgage, they will no longer be able to make their payments and so again they will lose their property. Once gasoline supplies run out our automobiles will be useless. And exposure walking or riding a bicycle would be extremely dangerous because of those looking for the rebels. For these reasons many Christians will starve to death.

Currently animals are wild because of the curse placed upon the earth when man fell from the grace of God in Eden. Consequently, they are somewhat controlled by the devil (but only as God allows). This is why the earth yields weeds, thorns and thistles. It is why wild animals will run from man but will attack when cornered – They have a great fear of man. It is why there are poisonous snakes and other animals that carry poison (like certain spiders, jellyfish and so on). It is the reason meat-eating animals like lions and bears are so ferocious. For a time at least God is going to allow the devil to influence the beasts of the earth to seek and kill man, particularly those in rebellion to the Antichrist.

The appearance of this pale horse (a sort of light, sickening green color) will appear towards the end. It will bring death to one fourth of the earth, particularly in the population of Christian people. This pale horse upon who rides death and hell, is the result of the false peace, warring and inflation of the devil and it follows closely on the hooves of the three horses running before it.

## **SEAL FIVE – PERSECUTION FROM ANTICHRIST**

It was the Sabbath day in Capernaum, a small town of about 1500 on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee. As was the custom of most good Jews, they were allowed to walk to the Synagogue for a time to hear the Word of God. It was not church like we are familiar with today but it was a Saturday gathering out of respect for the day of rest – the Sabbath.

They were not allowed to work on the Sabbath for God Himself had declared it a day when no work was to be done. However, over the many years, different religious groups like the Pharisees had put definitions on just what was considered to be work. In an emergency, like one of the oxen falling in a ditch and needing helped out, or some other such situation they were allowed to take care of it on the Sabbath. The ox was part of their livelihood after all, and not getting it out until the next day could mean severe injury

or even death to the animal. That could not be tolerated because it was imperative to meeting their family needs. But somehow, they had come to define healing, or the practice of medicine on the Sabbath to fall under the category of work and so it was not allowed.

Jesus had been to this Synagogue before as is indicated in Mark 3:1 where it says that *“He entered the synagogue again ...”* He spent a lot of time around Capernaum so the people had grown accustomed to seeing Him there on the Sabbath.

But this day was a little different. On this day a man who is described as having a withered hand – probably caused by some form of paralysis, was present.

Another group was there as well. Some of the Pharisees were present. We aren't told as to whether they always came to the Synagogue on the Sabbath or if perhaps they had sent the man with the withered hand there so as to entrap Jesus into healing on the Sabbath. They were constantly looking for a reason to arrest Him.

On the surface it doesn't make sense why they would want Him out of the way. He performed miracles that could only come from God and only did good – Except when He spoke about their own deceitful ways. Jesus exposed the Pharisees for being self-righteous liars and cheats. He accused them of only wanting the money of the people and had, on more than one occasion, cost them money. This was unacceptable even if He did seem to work miracles from God. No, He upset their system too much and so He had to go.

They watched Jesus intently. Would He heal the man with the withered hand or would He refrain knowing that they were present. Either way would have been good for them. If He healed the man then they could accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath and could finally arrest Him. If He didn't then all the people would wonder why He had not and it would serve as a discredit to Him. They thought they had Him between a rock and a hard place.

Jesus spoke to the man, “Step forward,” and the man stood and came to Him. Okay, now all they had to do was to wait until He healed Him and He was theirs.

But Jesus turned, looked them square in the eye and asked, *“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?”* He said it in this way because if they answered that it was unlawful for Jesus to heal the man on the Sabbath then they would be speaking without compassion and would in essence be serving a death sentence on the man. Now the tables had turned and they could not answer without discrediting themselves. So, they kept silent.

After Jesus had looked at them in anger and was grieved because of their hard, sinful hearts, He then turned back to the man and told him to stretch out his hand. When he did his hand was now completely healed. What a wonderful miracle that had been witnessed that day. This man's life had been forever changed. But instead of rejoicing

the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they could destroy Jesus.

That seems strange, doesn't it? That someone who had done so much good would be the subject of a plot of how He could be destroyed? Why do men think like that? All through the centuries and millenniums those who only want to help, heal and give have been considered the enemy and have been subject to persecution, imprisonment and death. It doesn't make sense, does it? Unless that is, you factor in the evil of the devil. His influence makes those who are his children hate and despise those who are of God and only want to do good.

Christians have always been persecuted and killed because of their testimony. Their testimony is simply that they have been saved by a man who claimed equality with God who was killed on a Roman cross. That by its self may not be powerful enough to spark a movement but given that many eyewitnesses saw Him after He had risen from the dead, now we have something on which to build a testimony.

Because of this testimony, during the time shortly after the Church was born, Jewish leaders continued to persecute Christians and then the Roman government got in on it. Centuries later, after a corrupt Christianity took power, those supposed to be of the Church herself began persecuting those who only wanted to bring the Bible to all people by translating it into the common language.

Yet today Christians are persecuted. In many countries of the world Christians are still imprisoned, tortured and killed simply because of their testimony.

The Anti-christ will be no different. In fact, he will enhance the persecution like no other before him has done. Many believers will be executed simply because they profess Christ as their Savior. It seems impossible that those who are inspired by Christ to do good to their fellowmen would be hunted, persecuted and executed for that reason. But it has happened and will happen.

Christians will become the enemy of the kingdom of the Anti-christ and so become the number one public enemy with priority to eliminate them from the picture. Many thousands of Christians will be killed.

Revelation 6:9-11 says this: *"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed."*

Persecution of the Church will come to a climax under the rule of the Anti-christ. He will reign down more horror than all the tortures and persecutions before him. He is

the beast, influenced and possessed by the devil – that great Red Dragon – Who will wage war with the descendants of the woman. We don't know how many will be slain but there will be a great number. Some of us may live to see that day. Some of us may be in that number. I don't know. I don't want to be, but if so, then I pray "Lord, give me the strength to stand for the testimony. Allow me to count it all joy to be persecuted for Your name's sake."

## **SEAL SIX – GOD'S WRATH**

Wrath ... anger; rage; fury; outrage. Its definition seems to indicate not just an emotional feeling but the demonstration of such. People who "fly off the handle" because of their anger tend to do destructive things, and in the extreme they can become killers. This is why it is wrong for a Christian to become wrathful. Our rage can be exhibited in destruction without justification.

God is allowed to act in wrath simply because only He knows how to display it with true justification. The world has not experienced the wrath of God since the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is because we are currently living in the age of grace. It is the time when Christians are to be soul-winners bringing everyone we can into the saving knowledge of Jesus. We live in a day where, even though there are persecutions and we see cataclysmic events each year due to wild weather or destruction by man we are not yet seeing the wrath of God.

Yes, bad things do happen to good people. It is only the nature of the fallen world. All things bad happen in this world because of the curse placed upon it when Adam sinned in Eden. And sometimes good Christian people are at the wrong place at the wrong time and tragically experience these things that happen in a fallen world.

But the world has not seen the true wrath of God since Old Testament times. In 1 Thessalonians 5 Paul is speaking about the end times and in verse 9 he writes, "*For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ ...*" He is plainly telling us that the pouring out of God's wrath will not fall on those who are believers in Christ.

The last six verses of Revelation 6 give us a glimpse of the wrath of God that will be experienced after His people have been taken from the earth. His wrath will be displayed on those who have not chosen to accept Him and His freely given gift of salvation.

First there is a great earthquake. Of course, the Bible doesn't record the intensity of earthquakes but this one is unlike any other experienced. It is only a part of a cataclysmic event. We are told that not only does the earth shake so severely that every mountain and island is moved out of its place but also the sky is darkened so that the sun becomes as dark and sackcloth made from hair. The moon becomes red in color like blood possibly from the dust and debris in the air. This event is so severe that with mountains shaken and moved and islands moved from their place it alters geography.

There is also a cosmic display for the Bible describes the stars falling to the earth like a fig tree drops its figs as it is shaken by a mighty wind. We know from science that most of the stars we see are either other suns or reflections of suns on planets. These cosmic bodies would not fall to earth but something great must be happening in the galaxy and universe for not only do these heavenly bodies disappear from the sky but there is also a remarkable meteor shower upon the earth giving the appearance of these heavenly bodies falling to the earth. The Bible also says the something happens in the atmosphere above the earth for it is described as the sky receding like a parchment on a scroll - it has been rolled up so long that when released it rolls back in its place – so the sky pulls part of the atmosphere away.

Those who are left on the Earth will flee their cities that have probably crumbled to the ground running to caves – possible new ones that have formed from the terrible quakes, and they hide there in the caves and the rocks of the mountains. Not just one class but now kings, rulers, great men, commanders of armies, mighty men along with the slaves and poor become as one as they cry out to the rocks and mountains begging them to fall on them in effort to hide them from God who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

This is the wrath of God. We will speak of it in more detail later in on in the book of Revelation. Those who don't believe in God and try to explain Him away have no idea of what is in store for them. The world mocks us who know that God is real. They call us "feeble minded." They take their imaginative theories and call them truth. Regardless how much proof is given of the events in the Bible they still will try to explain them away. They still will deny them because they cannot accept them as truth without making themselves sinners in need of God's grace.

Their twisted ways of thinking will be even more evil under the evil reign of the Anti-christ. They will know there is a God but in demonic influence of this "beast" they will think God to be the villain. Yet even so they will cry to be hidden from God and would rather be crushed under the rocks and mountains than to face God Almighty.

They conclude their cry by stating *"For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"* There is only one way out, only one way to stand and that is to be engulfed deeply in the arms of His mighty grace.



## Chapter 9

# 144,000 PLUS A MULTITUDE

*“After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying ‘Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.’”*

*(Revelation 7:1-3)*

**S**o many have speculated as to the identity of this 144,000 sealed of God in their foreheads. One group says that these are all the believers that will go with Jesus in His initial coming. Others try to say that they are not Jews at all but are representative of believers. Let me emphatically state that nowhere in scripture has the believers in Christ been spoken of as taking the place of the Jewish people. There are some instances that suggest we are spiritually joined to the Jews but nowhere does it say that we have replaced them.

Yes, we are told that their branches were broken from the “tree” and we as Gentile believers were grafted in (see Romans 11:17-24) but this does not mean that we are now spiritual Israel and all verses regarding the Jewish people in the Bible actually refer to Christians. They do not. Israel was, is, and will always be God’s chosen people. We as Gentiles are fortunate that we have been allowed into the Kingdom of God and we should count it a great privilege to have been accepted. We should never look down on the Jews but always hold them up in respect.

Of course, they failed God. Yes, they rejected God. But the many prophecies in the Bible regarding their return to the Lord and His Divine salvation to them cannot be spiritualized, shrugged off or dismissed. They hold true and will be fulfilled.

This 144,000 sealed by God in their foreheads could be special missionaries key to winning back the Jews. I don’t know because we are not told. All we know is what the Bible specifically says. In these verses they are sealed and in Revelation 14:1-5 they are seen again standing on top of Mount Zion with none other than Jesus Christ. We will speak more of that incident later. However, the description found there should be mentioned here. Of them the Bible says (Revelation 14:4-5): *“They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”*

They are chosen 12,000 from among each of the tribes of Israel. From the description in chapter 14 it really seems that they were chosen individuals to go to Heaven

before the rapture of the saints because they are described as being “first fruits.” If this is true then they are hand-picked Israeli people who have always believed in Christ, were celibate men (not being defiled by women – sorry ladies; not my words but God’s), whose entire lives were consumed with following Christ wherever He led (He goes). There was no deceit found in their mouths (the intentions of their hearts) and are without fault before the throne of God. Nearly perfect individuals!

These men are not to be spiritualized for the Bible gives no suggestion of a spiritual application. Therefore, their identity should be taken literally. I can’t explain what God’s intended purpose is for these men but I don’t have to. He is God not me. He chose them not me. I can only let you know that they exist and will be chosen by God. They are not Christian Gentiles who are spiritualized into being Jews but actual Jews God has chosen as first fruits.

Chapter seven tells us that God’s wrathful judgements are withheld from the earth until these have been sealed. There are 12,000 from each of the tribes listed:

- 12,000 from Judah
- 12,000 from Reuben
- 12,000 from Gad
- 12,000 from Asher
- 12,000 from Naphtali
- 12,000 from Manasseh
- 12,000 from Simeon
- 12,000 from Levi
- 12,000 from Issachar
- 12,000 from Zebulun
- 12,000 from Joseph
- 12,000 from Benjamin

Okay, as you study that list you will notice some differences from other listings of the tribes of Israel throughout scripture. I did some reading as to why this listing is different and learned some things but realized that much of it is only speculation.

Joseph is listed but not Ephraim. Remember Manasseh and Ephraim were both sons of Joseph. But Ephraim was the one blessed especially by Jacob. So, it is pretty safe to assume that the listing of Joseph here is actually referring to Ephraim.

But the other exclusion is a mystery. The tribe of Dan is left out and Levi is used. In most of the Old Testament listings Levi is left out largely because the listings were of men of war. The tribe of Levi was excluded from war because they had been chosen and assigned as keepers of the Tabernacle (and later under Solomon, workers, priests and custodians of the Temple). There were three major branches of them, one assigned the duties of priesthood, another assigned to carry the articles and furnishings of the Tabernacle, and one to care for those things and serve the priestly branch. They were

excluded from war and so it makes sense that they would be excluded from the listings of the men of war.

In these passages the rites of sacrifice and temple worship are no longer in place so, this is not a listing of warriors as in the Old Testament. Therefore, Levi is once again listed. You would think that Dan would also be listed and the sons of Joseph (Manasseh and Ephraim) would both be included as the tribe of Joseph. But God chose differently.

Some have speculated that Dan was the first tribe to fall wholly into idolatry (see the book of Judges) and that is true. They did exactly that. Because of their early idolatry some have said that God excluded Dan. Nowhere is that specifically stated so I am not going to suggest this as truth. The fact remains that no one really knows why Dan is excluded. Only God knows for sure and for that reason I am not going to try to second guess God. We will just let it rest where it lies.

A third difference is that Judah is listed before Reuben. Remember that Reuben was the oldest son of Jacob. In most genealogies the oldest son is always listed first. In Genesis 35:22 we read where Reuben had sexual relations with his father's concubine, the servant of Rachel, namely Bilhah. We are not told how Jacob reacted to this until Genesis 49:3-4 where Jacob was pronouncing blessings on his sons prior to his death, of Reuben he said, *"Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it – He went up to my couch."* Also, Judah became the leader of the tribes beginning when he stepped up to Joseph (before he knew that he was his brother, in Egypt) and took the leadership position, offering himself instead of Benjamin and his other brothers. So, in the listing in Revelation 7 Judah is first and Reuben second.

Some may also speculate that the ten tribes that made up the divided kingdom of Israel, namely Reuben, Dan, Simeon, Ashur, Zebulun, Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, Gad and Naphtali were lost when they were removed from their land under Assyrian captivity. Many of those remaining in Samaria were disbursed into other nations never to be heard from again. However, we are specifically told in 2 Chronicles 15 and again in 30 that many from Ashur, Zebulun, Ephraim, Manasseh and Issachar fled to Jerusalem. It stands to reason that some from the other tribes had at one time or another migrated to Judah. As Israel degraded further and further into sin, many from these tribes who wanted to stay true to God chose to leave their tribes. Also, Judah and Benjamin were the tribes that remained loyal to Rehoboam when the kingdom split. Most Levites were stationed in the cities of Jerusalem and the southern cities of Refuge. Then Simeon, who rebelled with the other tribes, was a land-locked nation surrounded by Judah. Those rebelling would have had to leave their tribal allotment to be loyal to the Northern Kingdom. So, there were many from the other tribes preserved in Judah.

We are told that these 144,000 Jewish men were set apart and sealed in their foreheads as first fruits by God. Their purpose could have served as missionaries because right after that in Revelation chapter 7 we are told about a great number in

Heaven. But we are not specifically told that they were there due to the witness of this 144,000 so, let's not go there either.

Suffice it to say that they were just what God labeled them: First Fruits. Other than those who have died and gone on before, these men are the first fruits of called out men who have lived lives nearly perfect before God and have been taken to Heaven sort of as an honorarium of their faith. That is what we are told (that they are first fruits) and that is enough.

Why must we always want to know the answer? We must be patient about some things and realize that we might just not know until we get to Heaven ourselves. Once we are there, I am certain that we will say, "Oh, that's why. I understand now." and frankly we will probably say that about a great many things we don't actually know. We must realize that there are just some things God chose not to tell us and there is no shame in saying, "God hasn't told me so I just don't know the answer to that right now."

When we stick by the facts, we are much better off. So, let's do that. Let's not try to spiritualize these 144,000 Jewish men. Let's just realize that God chose them and the reason why (other than their near perfection) is His business, not ours.

## **A MULTITUDE IN HEAVEN**

I Thessalonians 5 speaks about the time when Christ returns for His people. Verse 9-10 says, *"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."* Plainly it is telling us that those who have been born again and have come into the kingdom (the children of light) are not appointed to the time when God pours out His wrath upon this world system. Just before He begins the events that mark the pouring out of His wrath, He will remove the remnant of His Church.

Before He does, tremendous and horrendous persecutions will be carried out by those who have chosen to follow the Anti-christ. Because the Church is such a threat to his plans and his kingdom, he will convince the rest of the world that the Christians and the Jews are enemies of the great plan of the New Order. His plans are to fulfill what all other dictators and emperors who have reigned from Nimrod down, wanted to accomplish. It has always been the spirit of the anti-christ when a single man or nation decides it can rule the world and begins to fight. That should be the first sign to us that it is the spirit of anti-christ, when the mandate is given that in order to have world peace those who stand in the way must be eliminated.

It is the desire of satanic-inspired men to keep the Earth, her people and all creation under the curse. It happened in the early kingdoms of the East. It happened with the Egyptian Empire, the Babylonian Empire, the Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, the Roman Empire, and more recently with the German Empire under Hitler, the Communistic Empire of the now defunct USSR and currently with the plans of the Muslim

world. The ultimate goal is world peace through elimination of all who don't concur with the beliefs and practices of their culture.

The climax of this will be under the rule of the Anti-christ. Though his plans are very similar to all the others, his will be the most terrifying and severe because he will not just be influenced by Satan but will be completely possessed and controlled by him. It will be the Devil's last thrust to keep the world from redemption.

The scripture that supports this teaching can be found in Revelation 7:9-17; Revelation 14:14-16 and Revelation 15:2-4. Revelation 7:9-17 is the first testimony of the taking out of the Church while the passages in chapter 14 and 15 are the second testimony of this same event.

In Revelation 7:9-17 we see an innumerable group of people standing before the throne of God. They are from every nation found on the Earth and are standing before the Lamb clad in white robes carrying palm branches in their hands. It serves as a reminder of the incident just before the crucifixion of Christ when He entered Jerusalem and the people spread their garments before Him as he rode on a donkey (symbolic of a newly crowned king). They also tore down palm branches and spread them on the road before Him. Just so those before the throne carry their palm branches showing that the Lamb is the King of kings.

They sing the salvation song saying *"Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"* When they say this the living creatures and elders also present in the throne room, fall down in worship of God saying *"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen."* What a glorious scene it is!

A conversation begins between John and one of the elders who asked John if he know who this great multitude was. John answered him by saying, *"Sir, you know."* Immediately the elder answered that these were those who came out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white – a very descriptive way of saying they came to Jesus and got saved. John is further told that they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. The best is that He who sits on the throne lives among them! Halleluiah! What a blessing to know that we get to live with God and the Lamb forever more! No more hunger; no more thirst; no more scorching sun to burn them. Instead, they are shepherded by the Lamb (think of it – a lamb is the shepherd) and lead them to living fountains of waters – and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. I want to be in that number.

Also, in description of this event is found in the second testimony beginning with Revelation 14:14-16. It is a description of the harvesting of the earth. It begins with the harvest of the saints. It describes the Son of Man – Jesus Christ sitting on the clouds thrusting in His cycle to reap. He is calling His children home before the outpouring of the great wrath of God. Note beginning in verse 17 the second reaping begins and it is one of blood – showing the wrath of God upon the wicked of the Earth.

Finally in Revelation 15:2-4 we see the sea of glass which stretches before the throne of God. We first see that sea of glass in Revelation 4 but it is empty. This time it is described as being mixed with fire and those who have gained the victory over the beast (Anti-christ), over his image, over his mark, and over the number of his name. They are standing on that sea of glass having harps and singing the song of Moses. Remember that most of the second testimony is told from a Jewish standpoint and that explains the singing of the song of Moses.

So, we see the two witnesses of the reaping of the saints – the removal of the Church in the middle of the tribulation period – it is God removing His people from the Earth so that He can begin pouring out his wrath upon it. It will finally result in the total destruction of the Earth and a new Heaven and new Earth being formed.

## Chapter 10

# THE LAST SEAL AND FOUR TRUMPETS

*“When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.”*

Revelation 8:1-2



*There* is never a boring day in Heaven. Forever the Almighty God is being praised. I suspect that it is constantly filled with activity. We have been erroneously given the picture of Heaven as a place where all its occupants spend their day reclining on clouds strumming harps. This is far from the case. What little we are actually told about Heaven in the Bible indicates that it is an extremely busy place. The Bible speaks of gardens and trees; administration and so forth. I'm going to interject a personal belief at this point (this isn't found in the Bible but is only my personal belief), based on our interests and activities while employed here on the Earth, we will be given jobs to do that will reflect our interests. It won't be like work here on Earth but it will be what greatly interests us and it will be a pleasure to do it. Talk about a dream job!

If this is true then it will be a noisy place. The sounds of people at their occupations will fill the atmosphere. And the sounds of joyful worship of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and God the Holy Spirit will go on night and day.

That is why it is such a big deal when the Bible speaks of silence in Heaven for a full half hour. As the Lion/Lamb (Jesus Christ) opens the seventh seal on the scroll it is followed by thirty minutes of complete silence in Heaven. Thirty minutes in a place of enormous activity is a very big deal. Can you even imagine the millions that have been suddenly removed from the Earth, united with those already there who have preceded them in death, along with the hosts of angels all stopping for thirty minutes in complete silence.

It must be something huge for this so great a host to keep complete silence for that long of a period of time. No whispers, no coughs, no shuffling of feet – Only complete silence. What is getting ready to take place demands complete awe from all those who are about to witness this next event. God has removed His Church finally from the Earth and is making ready to pour His wrath out upon it. Since Adam sinned in Eden God has held His wrath for the most part. Even then, He had come up with a plan of redemption to buy back the relationship with man and the planet. The price had been paid in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The period of building the Church – The Bride of Christ – had come to a close. And now, finally He could release His anger upon the devil and sinful mankind – Those left on Earth.

Seven angels stood before Him and each was given a trumpet. God's wrath was going to take place in stages beginning with these Heavenly Trumpeters. Another angel holding a golden censer moved in front of the golden altar before the throne of God. He was given a large amount of incense to burn on that altar and it was to be mixed with the prayers of the saints. Remember those prayers? They were given by those suffering great persecution from the Anti-christ as found in Revelation 6:9-11 and were uttered when the fifth seal had been torn from the scroll. As a reminder, this passage tells us *"When He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was accomplished."*

The scent of the burning incense along with these prayers of the saints ascended up to God as He was preparing to fulfill His promise, not only that given to these saints but to once and for all finally crush the devil's reign of terror that had begun so long ago in Eden. This is why He had pulled His Church from the Earth. He had promised that He would not pour out His wrath upon His own people (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

The passage tells us that the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from that golden altar and cast it down upon the Earth. As he did, the Bible says that there were noises, thundering, lightning, and an earthquake. It was a warning from the Almighty that the time of wrath was about to begin. There are terrible cataclysmic storms and effects of fallen nature that take place today. We hear of thousands being killed by them. This one is directly from God and as we said, serves as a warning to the Earth that the day of wrath has finally arrived.

It isn't going to be party and fun. There will be no parties held to ride out the hurricane of wrath that is coming. It will be cataclysmic beyond description. I want to be in that group that is silent in Heaven. I don't want to be expecting God's wrath here on Earth. There will be no deliverance from it. It is coming and nothing man can do will stop it. The only preparation we can make is to be sure of our salvation in Christ Jesus for that is the only escape of the wrath of Almighty God.

## **TRUMPETS**

My son played the trumpet in band during his high school years. I was so proud of him. He excelled and by his senior year his was the first chair trumpet. Because of his skill he furthered made his father proud as he was chosen by the local VFW to play "Taps" at many military funerals in the area.

Although of a somewhat different construction, trumpets also played an important part in the Bible. Many of the so-called trumpets in the Bible were actually shofar (a sort of trumpet made from a ram's horn). But in the book of Numbers Moses was instructed

by God to make two silver trumpets that were used for different signals, calling the people together in assembly, dismissing them and sounding different commands in war. Even in more recent warfare bugles (a type of trumpet) are used to sound out different commands.

We also saw that a trumpet was sounded preceding the call of the Church from the Earth to Heaven. But now there are seven trumpets made ready to begin a new command. Each of these trumpets will usher in a part of the wrath of God to fall upon the Earth and its remaining people.

This will be the most horrible of times in the history of mankind. During our tragic history, because of the fall of man in Eden, we have always had wars, disasters from the elements, and killing and hatred because of sinful man. People have experienced horrible tortures that have been justified from claiming them to be no more than animals to just plain old love of evil.

I believe we have the right to defend ourselves and our families from evil men. Our country, the United States of America, is great because we have defended our freedom. However, if our nation ever goes forth to conquer because of oil or because we want to control the Earth then we are wrong and those wars are wrong. There is a big difference between defending one's self and fighting to conquer others. And to torture other people is a travesty. We must guard against these things. Our goal as believers in Christ should be number one - To win others into the Kingdom of God.

The time during which God pours His wrath upon the cursed Earth and sinful man will be beyond imagination and description. John has tried fervently to describe what he saw here in the account found in the Book of Revelation. All I can really say is that it will be the worst of times in human history.

There is one difficulty we need to address. Particularly in the description of the happenings of the fifth trumpet, it is said that these persecutions only affected those who did not have the seal of God in their foreheads. This would indicate that there are still people of God on the Earth. But how is this possible if God has removed His people to escape His wrath.

The Bible doesn't really explain this completely and in detail but this is my belief. Until death or the final judgement man always has a chance to be reconciled to God. So, there must be those who have still not yet taken the mark of the beast who for one reason or another has committed themselves to God. They will endure some of the hardships of God's wrath, particularly those poured out on nature. But those affecting direct persecution like in the fifth seal, will be spared from that difficulty. Again, this is not directly spoken in the scripture and is my belief. Take it for what you will.

Also, I will add that some of these judgments are similar to those that fell on the Egyptians when Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt. I don't read of any prophetic connections to these so we must not try to read between the lines and accept the literal

significance of these judgments. These things being said, we begin with the Trumpet Judgments.

## **THE FIRST TRUMPET**

*“The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.” (Revelation 8:7).*

At the sounding of the first trumpet, we are told that hail mixed with fire and blood fall to the ground. It must be worldwide for it tells us that one third of the trees were consumed and all green grass was destroyed. On the surface this may not sound like a severe judgment, but remember that our oxygen supply is renewed from plant-life. Also, the fruit of trees and of several grasses provides a great deal of food to the world. If all the grass is consumed then that means no grain from the different grasses is to be found and also much of the fruit and nuts from trees producing them. No wheat or barley, no bread!

For those remaining on the Earth, food prices that have already been greatly inflated will once again become higher because of the shortage of supply. It will mean that many cannot buy food simply because they don't have the money. It will encourage even more crime, hatred and calamity.

## **THE SECOND TRUMPET**

*“Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.” (Revelation 8:8-9).*

The next plague from the second trumpet is described as a great mountain burning with fire being cast into the sea. We know that this is symbolic because of the wording “as a.” As before mentioned the Bible tells us when something is symbolic. However, no explanation is given for what this is symbolic of. Some have speculated that it is an erupting volcano. But volcanoes have been in existence since the fall of man and are a part of the curse on the Earth so I would think that John would know what a volcano was. We must remember that he is describing in words he best knows to describe the events he is seeing in this vision. That being the case, we have to assume that whatever he is witnessing is something he hasn't seen before.

Whatever it is it has enough destructive force to turn a third of the sea into blood, kill a third of all living creatures in the sea and destroy a third of all ships. Some have tried to explain this as an advanced weapon of man and we can't rule that out because this would certainly be something that John had never seen and would have to describe in terms he understood. However, I have taken the rule to not try to explain those things we do not know.

Whether it is an advanced weapon of man or a meteor thrown from the heavens by God Himself, we aren't told. All we know is that God has allowed this to fall upon the Earth and great devastation takes place.

Remember that this is the time of the wrath of God. Whether it comes by the hand of man allowed by God or from God Himself doesn't really matter. What does matter is the magnitude of the destruction. We have seen great catastrophes in our days but nothing to this degree. Just think of it; one third of all sea life is destroyed. Think of the food shortage this would cause. One third of the oceans of the world are turned to blood unable to sustain life so it also prohibits new birth in those areas so one third of all sea life that would have been reproduced would also be stopped.

Also, one third of all the ships and those aboard those ships are destroyed. According to the 2011 estimate from the Maritime Knowledge Centre, there are as many as 104,000 vessels (including large ships, commercial vessels and boats) on the oceans at a given time. This would mean that approximately 35,000 vessels would be completely destroyed by the sounding of this trumpet, as well as all the people aboard those vessels.

And so, the toll on man from the wrath of God continues.

## **THE THIRD TRUMPET**

*"Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A Third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water because it was made bitter."*

The next cataclysmic event is a great star, or more than likely a meteor. These things are flying around in space as we speak. Many meteors or asteroids or "space rocks" out there have been circling in the realms of outer space since the beginning of time. Astronomers would probably have us believe that it is some freak accident but since God made the universe and everything in it, why couldn't it be possible that He created this "space rock" from the beginning and orchestrated it to hit the earth just at this time. Or He also could have simply re-directed this asteroid to fulfill His purpose.

Remember that this is the period of the wrath of God poured out on this rebellious people. After already wiping out one third of all sea life and ships by turning the a third of the water into blood, another third of the waters are struck by this asteroid making them poisonous.

The Bible calls it "Wormwood" which is a plant found in the Middle East. Even though it is normally not poisonous it is known to be very bitter to the taste. Some believe that this asteroid burning through the earth's atmosphere will create a toxic gas that settles in a third of the world's drinking water. The Bible doesn't say how it is done but the fact of the matter is that while a third has been made undrinkable by being turned to

blood now another third of what is left has become a drink of death. The Bible says that many men died from the water. Imagine if you will how scarce a clear cold glass of water will become? I took my grandson to see a movie not too long ago and was amazed that in the theater a normal bottle of drinking water was priced at \$5.00. However, in the described water crisis that could be cheap.

The first three trumpet blasts will bring plagues that attack food and water – the basic needs of man. Many will die because of consuming this water. But many will also die because of a lack of water to drink.

## **THE FOURTH TRUMPET**

*“Then the fourth angel sounded: and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.”*

At the sounding of the fourth trumpet, we see the heavens as the next target of the wrath of God. The Bible tells us that one third of the sun, one third of the moon, and one third of the stars were stricken in such a way that they did not cast light on the earth for a third part of the day.

Examining this passage, the only way this could be possible would be if the Earth speeded up its rotation. The Bible tells us that not only is a third of the day gone but also a third of the night. This would mean that the earth begins to rotate one and one third times faster.

This would affect our climate, our gravitational pull and a host of other things we daily take for granted. Air travel may be made impossible. Temperatures would plummet, and because of the increase in gravity all travel, including walking would become a difficult feat.

In short, the entire planet would be in chaos. So just think about how this is going down; we have lost a third of all plant life to the hail and fire mixed with blood that was poured out at the sound of the first trumpet. Then a third of the sea has been turned into blood and a third of all sea life has died and a third of all our sea vessels destroyed along with the people on them. Then at the third trumpet a third of all remaining water is made poisonous and deadly to mankind. Finally, we lose a third of our day and night and life is beyond topsy-turvy.

One would think “how could it get any worse” when we read these words: *“And I looked and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, ‘Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound.’”*

It is somehow going to get worse. The wrath of God is beyond anything man can imagine. Sin has reigned for centuries and all of that sin is about to be judged by God.

## Chapter 11

# TWO MORE TRUMPETS

*“Then the fifth angel sounded . . . Then the sixth angel sounded . . .”*

Revelation 9:1 and 9:13

**A**t this point the Earth is in shambles. Devastations in magnitudes like never before have been experienced by man. As if it wasn't enough, two more trumpets are yet to sound:

### **THE FIFTH TRUMPET**

*“Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.” (Revelation 9:1-3).*

The sounding of the fifth trumpet brings the opening of the bottomless pit. It is opened by a star falling from the sky (heaven). The Bible doesn't comment as to the identity of this fallen star, though by the mere fact that it has the ability to take a key and open the bottomless pit it must be a living being or creature.

The Bible doesn't put any emphasis on the star so we won't either. Attempting to identify the star only detracts from the focus of the fifth trumpet. The main message of this trumpet is that of the locusts arising from the opened pit. Immediately after the star opens the pit, there is so much smoke coming from it that the air and the sun is darkened.

What comes from the pit next sounds like a creature right out of a horror movie. There is nothing in the language of the Bible to indicate that we are to spiritualize these creatures so to rightly interpret the Word we must look at them exactly as the Bible describes them. We aren't told how big they are so I will assume since they are first described as locust, that they are small in size. Even though they are called locust the Bible tells us that they are given the power of scorpions. The locust are told not to hurt the grass (although the first thing we think of when we think of locust), any green thing or any tree (during the previous four trumpets, all the grass and one third of the trees have been destroyed. Apparently, some time has elapsed and some grass has grown back). They are however allowed to hurt people who are not marked with the seal of God.



They are not allowed to kill people but to bring five months of torment similar to the torment of the sting of a scorpion. This torment is so great that those being attacked by these creatures will wish they are dead.

The actual description given of these creatures is that they look like war horses prepared for battle. There is a crown on their heads made of something similar to gold and they have the face of a man. They have long hair like a woman and have teeth as strong and aggressive as that of a lion. They have tough breastplates described as being like breastplates of iron. Their sound is like chariots being pulled by many horses. They have tails like scorpions with stings in them and we are told again that they have power to hurt men five months.

They are an organized army with a king called “Abaddon” in Hebrew or “Apollyon” in Greek which in both instances means “destroyer.” This king is also referred to as the angel of the bottomless pit. In the Book of Revelation, the words “star” and “angel” have been used interchangeably. So, in my estimation (note that the Bible does not come right out and say this, again it is my estimation) that the star that fell from the sky was the angel over this evil hoard from the bottomless pit.

Remember at this point that the Church has now been translated to Heaven and except for the 144,000 sealed of God from the tribes of Israel, and the few who have possibly come to the Lord after the translation of the Church, all on the Earth are targeted for the wrath of God. And so, these demonic hoards are unleashed upon mankind for five months and will issue extreme pain on them during this time.

This is the first of the three woes uttered in the fourth trumpet. Two more are coming.

## **THE SIXTH TRUMPET**

*“Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.” (Revelation 9:13-15).*

Never has such an army been raised as that which is described in the verses about the sixth trumpet. After the sixth angel had blown his trumpet, we are told that a voice spoke from the four horns of the golden altar before God instructing the sixth angel to release the angels (or messengers) that had been bound at the river Euphrates. The fact that they were bound suggests that these are not necessarily good angels. These angels have been prepared for one purpose: For this event described as “the hour, and day and month and year – just for this time, to release a great army that will kill a third of mankind.

The army accompanying these four angels is a very large army, in fact probably the largest in history. At present the largest army in the world is that of China numbering 2,330,000. But the army assembled here numbers 200,000,000. That is more than the combined force of the top ten largest armies on Earth!

Those in this army will be wearing breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow. They ride horses that have heads like lions breathing fire, smoke and brimstone. Their tails were as serpents with a head on the end apparently armed with fangs dripping venom. With the fire, smoke and brimstone spuming from their mouths and the bite of the serpents on their tails, many people will be destroyed.

The sole purpose of this army is to kill one third of the world population. As of this writing, the world population was estimated to be 8 billion. Earlier in the book of Revelation a fourth of the population was destroyed. Based on current numbers that would amount to 2 billion people leaving 6 billion. So, this army of men and horses will kill approximately an additional 2 billion reducing the number (factoring in the other deaths from some of the other disasters described in this book) to somewhere around 4 billion people.

As devastating as all this sounds instead of repenting and drawing men to Christ (for in days gone by until recently, all tragedies have spawned a revival of people coming to the Lord), the Bible tells us that those who were not killed by these plagues (excepting for those sealed by God) would not repent of the works of their hands, their worship of demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood (which are lifeless and cannot see, hear or walk). Neither would they repent of their murders, their sorceries or the sexual immorality or theft. What a tragedy. But remember at this point if those remaining on the earth are not sealed by God then they have taken the mark of the beast and have doomed themselves to serve the devil.

After the events brought to pass by the sounding of the sixth trumpet, there is a pause before the seventh trumpet describing the warning of the two witnesses which we will discuss in the next chapter.

## Chapter 12

# THE MIGHTY ANGEL - PROPHECY AGAIN

*“I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.”*

Revelation 10:1

*“And he said to me, ‘You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.’”*

Revelation 10:11

*The* Book of Revelation is filled with angels – Good and bad. Remember that the name “angel” means “messenger from God.” Chapter 10 is no exception when it comes to angels except, it seems to me, the identity of this angel fits only one individual. Some will say that it is an angel because of the wording “another mighty angel” which they interpret as an angel like the one before. That certainly could be true, but if so, it would have to be an especially trusted angel because of the proclamation made.

However, this messenger could be Christ Himself as He was the last one holding the scroll, He is the one who opened it and it makes sense to me that He would be the one to read it and make the announcement that is made here. We see Him coming down from the sky, clothed in a cloud, which matches that described by the angels in the first chapter of Acts who tells those witnessing the event of Christ’s ascension, *“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”* (Acts 1:11). His ascension took place on the Mt. of Olives. Here in Revelation 10, we see this messenger descending, crowned with a rainbow, his countenance as brilliant as the sun and his feet like pillars of fire. In his hand was the little book, or scroll, now opened because all the seals have been removed.

Upon reaching the surface of Earth he sets one foot on the sea and the other on the land, and cried out loudly like a lion roaring – The Lion of Judah as we are told in Revelation 5:5. All these descriptions of this angel leave little doubt that this Messenger is the true Author of Revelation – The Revelation of Jesus Christ – He must be our Lord and Savior. He was given the scroll sealed. One by one, He removed the seals from the scroll, and now He stands on the Earth, ready to proclaim the stipulations of the contract to be finally and once and for all, fulfilled. What an exciting time! Finally, redemption has come to this cursed world.

After He cried out, we are told that seven thunders sounded, each with yet another message (for it says they uttered their voices). However, for some reason God didn’t want us to know, at least yet, what these thunders said. John was commanded to seal these up. Whatever they said, we won’t know until it actually happens. God always has a reason to do what He does. So, there is no need to spend any valuable time trying to guess. We’ll know when the time is right, when God wants us to know.

What is important and what is critical is what was said next. Jesus Christ, raises His hand towards the sky *“and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.”* (Revelation 10:6-7).

He is speaking of no other than the completion of redemption. He is reclaiming possession, control of and re-establishment of what was lost in the original sin of Adam and Eve. They sinned and gave it all to the devil. Now Christ, who has paid the penalty for sin, and was raised to life, Victor over death and hell, has legally taken back what was His.

Paul wrote in Romans 8:19-23, *“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”* The entire planet has waited for what takes place in Revelation 10. Finally, it is ready to be restored to what it was before man made all this mess. Yes, we are responsible. All the tragedy, raging weather, erupting volcanoes and travesty of this world is not God’s fault. It is ours. We made this mess and only Jesus Christ can get us out of it. Here we see it taking place. Hallelujah! What a day! When this takes place there will be no further delay! To echo the words of the great Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., all of mankind, all the world, the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom and God’s complete kingdom, is *“free at last, free at last; thank God we’re free at last!”*

We are plainly told that this will take place during the days of the sounding of the seventh trumpet. As it is about to sound the Bible says, *“The mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.”* (Verse 7). The prophets have long announced the coming of this day. We will see it take place in Chapter 11.

## **THE SECOND WITNESS**

The chapter then takes a new turn. The voice from Heaven that has been speaking to John speaks again and says, *“Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.”* (Revelation 10:8). John obeyed the voice, went to the Lord, and asked for the scroll. When he did, he was told, *“Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.”* (Revelation 10:9). Again, John obeyed and said that it was indeed sweet as honey in his mouth, but it made his stomach bitter. We aren’t told the interpretation of this, but in my estimation the promise and fulfillment of redemption is very sweet. But the price paid, both by our Lord, the evil of the devil and the death and destruction caused by it, is indeed a bitterness in the stomach.

John is then told, *“You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues and kings.”* (Revelation 10:11). It has been pretty well established in the Bible that the truth is to be established by two or three witnesses. Here are the scriptural references to that: Deuteronomy 17:6, Deuteronomy 19:15, Matthew 18:16, 2 Corinthians 13:1, 1 Timothy 5:19 and Hebrews 10:28. From these I quote 2 Corinthians 13:1 which says, *“This will be the third time I am coming to you. ‘By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.’* Moses said it concerning witnesses against a man found guilty of death. Jesus said it in regards to matters being settled in the Church, and Paul echoed that teaching.

The witness of the vision of Revelation is no different. The revelation of the four horsemen is like a quick, broad view of what is about to take place. From the conclusion of the Church Age until this point in the book, becomes another witness. Now John is told that he must prophesy again. It will be of the same events but from a different perspective and in different details. The third witness spends more time introducing and describing the dragon, Anti-christ and the false prophet and will show just how evil this devil-possessed man will be. It isn't pretty, but neither has the entire redemption process been. However, it is necessary to bring about a full cleansing and purging of the planet we call Earth.

Here we go; let's do it again.

## ***ANOTHER WITNESS***

## Chapter 13

# TWO WITNESSES

*“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.’ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.”*

Revelation 11:3-4



I like to tell stories, especially about things that happened during my childhood and teen years. I really do try to keep them factual, you know, telling them as they really happened. But, not long ago, I was telling a familiar story to family members. I told it just as I have many times before. However, when I finished, my brother spoke up stating that he remembered a few things about that story a little differently. It seemed strange to me because I really remembered it the way I told it. But so did my brother.

That lets me know that when things happen those witnessing it will see things about what took place a little differently because they see the details that are significant to them. The story is basically the same but the details are different. All of the things the witnesses saw were true but not all things were remembered the same way by each witness.

While this is not exactly the case with the revealing of Christ given to John, this part of the vision we are calling another witness, brings out details of the time period we have already covered with different details. The next few chapters fill in the blanks left open by the first account, but not necessarily in sequential order. Rather, they describe events that take place during the same time period but with a bit more detail like describing characters. For instance, chapter 11 talks about the temple and the two witnesses. These lived and did their part along with the things described in the next few chapters. In other words, each of the next few chapters cover the same time period and are all basically happening simultaneously.

## **THE TEMPLE**

In Revelation 11:1-2 the temple is addressed. John was given a reed that was similar to a rod, used to measure. A reed is a tall, slender plant that is considered a grass, and grows in wet and marshy ground. Pieces of it were also used to dip in ink and use as a pen. In this case it was most likely a long length of the grass because it is compared to a measuring rod (a length of wood, usually round and approximately 16 ½ feet long). Why a fragile reed is used seems to me to make reference to the delicacy of this situation. It was used to measure the temple.

As of today, the temple is not standing. Many believe that it will be rebuilt before the end-times begin. Certainly, there have been many rumors that have emerged from

Israel as to the possibility of rebuilding the temple. Only those involved really know for sure. However, and whenever it occurs, one thing is certain and that is that in the time of this prophecy the temple is already reconstructed and standing in Jerusalem.

Remembering the rules of the temple of the Old Testament, only Jewish people were allowed inside. Really no one except the priests were allowed in the Holy Place, and only the High Priest in the Holy of Holies. The outside court was where the sacrifices took place. A large number of Jewish people, preparing their sacrifices and taking care of religious business, could be found there.

Popular belief speculates that somehow the Anti-christ will negotiate a deal with the Israeli people in the rebuilding of the temple which gives him liberty concerning it. I can't address that because the Bible doesn't really say. Perhaps it is true. Whether it is or isn't, this individual will be given great influence in all the world and for that reason the outer court will yield access to Gentiles (anyone who is not a Jew). It also says that the city of Jerusalem will be overrun by these Gentile people for forty-two months (or three-and one-half years). Tensions will be high in the city because of the tolerance of the Gentiles. It is not certain whether these Gentiles are tourists or Gentile leaders under the Anti-christ. Maybe they are both.

## **THE TWO WITNESSES**

During this time two witnesses of God will appear on the scene. These are identified as the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. Olives from the olive tree were used in making the anointing oil while the purpose of the lampstand is to give light. If these two descriptions represent anything it is that the two witnesses are anointed by God and reflect the light of God. But we are not told this specifically.

People have attempted to identify who these two witnesses are. Because of the miraculous abilities ascribed to them, and because they met with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, that they are Moses and Elijah. Others identify them as Enoch and Elijah because neither of these two men suffered death, but were translated to Heaven. Either could be correct. But it is also possible that neither are correct. God chose not to identify them by name but simply described them as the two witnesses of God. Zachariah also had a vision of the two Olive Trees in Zachariah 4. He simply identifies them as "*...the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth*" (Zachariah 4:14), which corresponds to what John saw in Revelation 11:4. Because these are the only two descriptions of these people, we will leave their identities at that.

Who they are is not as nearly as important as what they do. First of all, they are witnessing of God, clad in sackcloth (which is what those who were fasting wore in Old Testament times) in the city of Jerusalem while the Gentiles over-run the city. If the Anti-christ is present there, then they are in direct opposition to him, making them public enemy number one in his regime. The Bible tells us that if anyone wants to harm them (and I'm certain the Anti-christ will send out many assassins in attempt to be rid of them), then they

will be destroyed by fire from their mouths. Anyone wanting to harm them will be killed in this manner (Revelation 11:5).

These witnesses have the God-given power to command that no rain falls from the sky during their time of service. They also have the authority to turn water to blood, and to call down plagues as often as they desire. Their ministry is said to last for one thousand, two hundred and sixty days – All but seventeen days of the three- and one-half years that the temple court and city are overrun by the Gentiles.

When they have completed their time of testimony, God allows the beast that arose from the bottomless pit (the demonic leader of the devil's hoards) to slay the two witnesses. The majority of those in the world do not have God's mark, and so the masses left on Earth, with the exception of those marked by God, will witness the execution of the two witnesses. This is possible because of world-wide communications via satellite in today's world. They will be so happy about it that they will rejoice, throw parties and celebrate while the live stream focuses on their dead bodies for three-and one-half days. It will be so monumental to them that they will even send gifts to each other. Sort of sounds like a replacement for Christmas.

Where they lie dead is described as the "great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt" and that normally refers to Babylon. But it adds "where also our Lord was crucified." This is, of course, Jerusalem. But it is rightly so called because of the leadership representation in Jerusalem during the reign of the Anti-christ. Their bodies will not be embalmed, nor put into graves but left lying in the street for all to see.

At the end of the three-and one-half days, we are told that the breath of life from God entered into them and they are brought back to life – Right there on national TV! All watching will see it, bringing great fear to their hearts. But instead of taking revenge on those responsible for their deaths, they hear a loud voice coming from Heaven telling them to "Come up here" (the same words spoken to John at the beginning of this vision in Revelation 4). Immediately they ascend to Heaven in a cloud while their enemies watch in dread and awe.

This event is followed by a localized earthquake destroying one tenth of the city and killing seven thousand people. The Bible says that all the rest were afraid and gave the credit for this action to God.

All of this takes place during the persecution of believers in Christ and during the first three-and one-half period of the tribulation. We are then told that the second woe is past and one more woe is to come.

## **THE SEVENTH TRUMPET**

When the seventh trumpet sounds loud voices from Heaven speak saying, "*The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!*" (Revelation 11:15).

Another praise session erupts in Heaven. We see the twenty-four elders falling on their faces and worshipping God. In unison they praise saying, *“We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.”* (Revelation 11:17-18).

After this the true temple of God, located in Heaven, and the ark of His covenant is seen by those in Heaven. Whether this is the ark constructed while the people of Israel were in route to the Promised Land or if that was just a model of this one, is unclear. But if it is the ark God instructed Moses to make, then all the searching being done today to find it is in vain because it is in Heaven. This was followed by lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake and great hail. This is the beginnings of the wrath of God being poured out on those inhabitants left on the Earth.

## Chapter 14

# ISRAEL, THE CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

*“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

Revelation 12:17

*Have* you ever tried to compress two-thousand years of history in a handful of words? So many details have to be left out. How can you decide what is to be kept and what is to be left out, yet accurately tell the important details that define the entire period? This is what is accomplished in Revelation 12. It covers the same time as chapters 2 and 3. While those chapters concentrate on the history of the Church, chapter 12 speaks mostly of Israel and concludes with the Church.

This chapter introduces some of the main participants in the Tribulation Period, just like a good novel will spend the first couple of chapters describing characters, making them believable and identifiable. We get to know them; we see them in our minds and form their personality in our brain. Just so, the Lord is cluing us in on the main characters of the prophecy.

In Genesis 37:10 we read of a dream that Joseph had. He was the firstborn of Rachel to Jacob and the eleventh son of Jacob. In his dream God was telling him how that he would be great in Egypt and that his brothers and parents would fall down before him. His parents were described as the sun and the moon and his brothers as the stars. The dream became a reality when, during the great famine, they did indeed bow before him unknowingly to get grain to sustain them.

John is given a vision of a woman clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet, and the garland of twelve stars on her head. This woman could be no other than the nation of Israel, as compared to the dream of Joseph. And so, we have the first character outlined in chapter 12.

Verse 2 describes her as “being with child, and crying out in labor pains.” Without doubt this is telling us that Christ came from Israel. He is the child that makes the woman cry out in pain. All through the Old Testament there is testimony of the Messiah – the Christ – coming from Israel. In Luke 2 we see Mary, the chosen mother of the Messiah, great with child and ready to deliver.

The next character we meet is the villain of the prophecy. Revelation 12:3-4 says, *“And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who*

was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.” This is not talking about an event during the tribulation but given to show who this “fiery red dragon” really is.

To see the full picture, we need to look at a couple more passages. The first is found in Isaiah 14:12-15 which says, *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High-.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the pit.”* Let’s examine this with Ezekiel 28:12-15, *“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.”*

Sometimes in prophecy God interjects thoughts that have double meanings. He did that in many of the prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament prophets. So, it is easy to see that in these two passages, which began speaking of other individuals (namely the ruler of Babylon in Isaiah and the prince of Tyre in Ezekiel). Putting these two passages together with what we read in Revelation 12, we see a full description of what happened, probably even before Adam was created. The once angel, called Lucifer, put himself above God. In jealousy he wanted to be above God. Because of his sin he was cast from heaven. In verse 4 we are told that his tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Some believe that these falling stars were a third of the angels in Heaven who chose to follow him when he was cast out, becoming the demon hoards – his minions. It might also mean that his fall was so great that a third of the heavenly bodies were cast to earth in a monstrous meteor shower. Either could be true but we aren’t told specifically.

He is also described as having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. This alludes to the kingdom that is set up by the unholy trinity, namely, the dragon, the beast (Anti-christ) and the false prophet, who we will meet in the next chapter.

We see this dragon standing before the woman (Israel) who is pregnant with child. The dragon knows that this Child is the One who will redeem creation. For that reason, he is waiting for the Child to be born so he can immediately devour Him. We see this attempted when Herod, wanting to kill Jesus because the thought of a baby King threatened his own kingdom, asked the Wise Men to return to him and tell him where the young child was feigning that he too wanted to go and worship Him. God warned the Magi and they returned to their homeland by a different route. When King Herod realized that they weren’t coming back he had his soldiers go to Bethlehem and murder every boy

child two years old and under. However, God had warned Joseph and so, before Herod's men came, he took his family and fled to Egypt. (See Matthew 2).

Revelation 12:5 tells us that as soon as the Child was born and before the dragon could devour Him that He was caught up to God and his throne. This refers to Jesus being resurrected, and His ascension to God.

Okay, now don't forget, the chapters of the second witness are more of a detailed description of the characters found in the prophecy of the end-time events. They aren't necessarily in consecutive order, and so, after we see the child snatched away to God in Heaven, we are told that the woman fled to a place prepared by God where she will be protected and fed for one thousand, two hundred and sixty days – half of the seven tribulation years. This must be referring to the first part of the seven-year period, because we see that afterward the dragon concentrates on those who are believers in Christ – the Church. The Church is still on Earth but will be removed before God pours out His wrath, so it must be the first 3-1/2 years.

Next, in verses 7-12 we see a war breaking out in Heaven between Michael, the Archangel of God, and the dragon who once was Lucifer. As this war is waged, the angels of God prevail and the dragon and his angels are cast from Heaven down to Earth. We aren't told when this war breaks out (it could be going on right now) because the devil is called the accuser of the brethren (see 12:10), which indicates that the devil can come before God at times to accuse those who belong to Christ. This happened to Job in the first few chapters of that book. The devil went before God and accused Job of serving Him only because of the blessings that had been given to him. Basically, it appears that sometime before the tribulation begins that this war takes place and the dragon is cast to Earth from Heaven, never to enter again.

This is both good and bad. Good because beginning at that moment the devil can no longer go before God and bring accusation of the believers in Christ. Imagine, right now, as we have trials and temptations in this life, the devil goes before God, reminding Him of the sins we have committed. When He is cast from Heaven, he can no longer do this. That is good for Christians. But it is also bad because then he will be cast to the Earth where he persecutes the woman (Israel) and the Church. We are told in verse 11 that they overcome the devil, not by strength or might, but only by the word of their testimony and that they did not love their lives even to death. It means that they will stand on their testimony even if it means execution, and it will.

The Heavens are told to rejoice because this accuser is no longer there, but woe to the Earth and sea because the devil has come down and He will work because he knows his time is short. He establishes the unholy trinity, which we will see in coming chapters.

Verses 13-17 describe in greater detail what has already been addressed in verse 6, namely, that of the persecution of the woman. We are told that when the devil realizes that he has been cast down and confined to the Earth that he begins to persecute the



woman – Israel (and how she has been persecuted by all the Arabic and Muslim nations surrounding her). She is symbolically given two wings, like those of a great eagle, to swiftly fly to her pre-prepared place of safety in the wilderness, where she will be for 3-1/2 years. Some have tried to describe these two wings like an eagle to mean the United States, but they really are only used to describe the swiftness with which she will be transported. Remember, to correctly interpret the Book of Revelation, we must only symbolize and spiritualize where it is clear from what is written that it is to be taken as such. Otherwise, we take it literally, as it is. There is another scripture that tells us that God took them as on eagle's wings. Exodus 19:4 says, *"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself."* The LORD was speaking to Moses when He used this reference. Here in Revelation the application is the same. As she flees to her place the devil spews a flood from his mouth in attempt to stop the woman, but Earth, which is really God's, helps her by opening a crevice in which the flood falls and is stopped.

Finally in Chapter 12 we are told that this so angers the devil that he turned his attention to the offspring of the woman – the Church – those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Christ (12:17).

Again, the events of this chapter are not in chronological order, but are descriptions of and introductions to characters of the tribulation. So, to hopefully clarify a bit, let's list those things brought to light in this chapter and try to put them in an order that, hopefully, will make this chapter a bit easier to understand.

- (1) The nation of Israel is introduced as the woman clothed in the sun, with the moon at her feet and a garland of 12 stars around her head.
- (2) She gives birth to a son who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron – this describes the birth of Jesus Christ. The devil wishes to kill Him and stop His mission of salvation but He is caught up to Heaven where He now sits by the right hand of God the Father.
- (3) War breaks out in the heavens between the angels of God and the devil and his angels resulting in Satan being cast from Heaven down to the Earth.
- (4) He immediately begins to persecute Israel who is given swiftness to take refuge at a pre-prepared place in the wilderness where she will be protected for 3-1/2 years. The devil spews a flood from his mouth to attempt to stop her and the ground opens up and swallows the flood.
- (5) Finally, we see the devil turning his attention to intense persecution of the Church.

## Chapter 15

# BEASTS

*“. . . And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.”*

Revelation 13:1

*“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.”*

Revelation 13:11

*The* warm, wet sand squished between John's toes as he stood there on the sea shore. The waves rhythmically rolled in and washed out. Gulls flew overhead squawking as they glided through the air. The sound of the water was hypnotic as it washed through the sand, wetting his feet. The blue sky above allowed a gentle breeze flavored with the salt water of the sea and featured an occasional white, puffy cloud to float by.

But something wasn't right. A feeling of evil hung heavily in the air. Then he saw the dragon standing on the shore as well. It was as if he were expectantly awaiting the arrival of something or someone. As he wondered suddenly a figure emerged from the water and walked toward the shore. As he waded coming closer and closer to land, John could see that this creature looked like a leopard, with feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion. Seven heads extended from his shoulders and ten horns were somehow situated atop those heads, with a crown on each horn. Now stepping up out of the water he could read writing on his heads which spelled out a blasphemous name. We are not told what that name is but I can imagine that it was something like "the christ." It was blasphemy. Here stood the Anti-christ.

Some biblical manuscripts say that "I" (referring to John) was standing on the shore, and others say "it" continuing from chapter 12 and referring to the dragon. It could be either; however, John was definitely there if not physically, certainly in the spirit. It does make sense and adds clarity to the reading to say that the dragon also stood on the shore, as if he were waiting the arrival of the beast. I personally believe that this adds clarity to the vision but either way it does not change what John saw concerning the beast.

It was the great dragon that gave him his power, his throne, and the great authority he wielded. The beast is described as being like a leopard, with feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion. These descriptions identify him as the same beast that was seen by Daniel in Daniel 7. The only difference is that Daniel saw four individual beasts, the first like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard and the fourth is not identified with an animal but is said to be "dreadful, terrible and exceedingly strong" (see Daniel 7:7). The Bible does not say this and so I want to make clear that this is my speculation. The reason for the difference is that in Revelation we are looking backward instead of forward. Daniel is predicting the beast to come and sees the coming kingdoms leading up to the dreadful beast, namely Babylon (the lion), the Medes and Persians (the bear),

and the leopard (the Greek Empire). John sees this in reverse because he is now looking at the beast, the one that is dreadful, terrible and very strong. He sees parts of the beasts that led to the dreadful beast, in reverse – the leopard, then the bear and finally the lion and these kingdoms are seen as parts of the dreadful beast. This makes perfect sense to me but again it is my speculation not exactly what the Bible says.

The beast is also described as having seven heads (again Daniel lets us know that these heads represent nations. Daniel identifies six of these, being Babylon, Medio-Persia, Greece, Rome and the dreadful, terrible and strong nation. The others in Revelation are not named and so I really have no recognizable suggestion. It could be a kingdom that preceded Babylon, or a nation that followed Rome. Since it isn't clear we won't try to identify it. Just let it be known that seven nations (and not just any nations but powerful empires with world dominance intended) led to the beast arising from the sea here in Revelation 15. On these heads were ten horns and ten crowns (signifying rulers). We don't know how many horns were on the individual heads, just that there were a total of ten.

One of his heads had been mortally wounded but only the scars were reminders of that wound because it had been healed. This further establishes that this beast is indeed the one we call the Anti-christ, because his deadly wound and miraculous survival of it by the power of the dragon, significantly is an anti-resurrection. Just as Jesus Christ was resurrected so one of the heads of the beast was also resurrected.

We are told in 13:3 that all the world marveled and followed the beast, and in 4, they worshipped both the dragon and this beast, saying, "*Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?*" (13:4). His power, resurrection and influence will be so great that the world will be impressed by him and he will be the first to successfully obtain world dominance. The world will favor him.

We aren't told exactly what significantly will take place to give this beast so much trust and influence, but I do want to address some modern-day events that make sense to me. Again, this is going to be my belief and speculation. In days gone by some have believed that the Anti-christ would arise from the Communist nations. However, that influence has weakened over the years. The once powerful USSR broke up and is non-existent today. Russia is still a powerful nation, as is China. But as time has progressed, an even greater threat to world peace has arisen, that being terrorism. This feared force does not originate in a single nation but can crop up anywhere and has its influence and power in the hearts of men. The most dreaded terrorist groups are those of radical Muslims who interpret the Quaran as meaning that they are to wage war on all who do not practice Islam. I want to say that there are peaceful Muslims. The Quaran, though not the truth, does say to only wage war on those who persecute their way of life. How that is interpreted by the radical Muslim groups is that anyone trying to convert a Muslim away from Islam is in fact persecuting them, is an infidel and is to be stopped by beheading. Christians are indeed instructed to spread the Gospel of Christ. But nowhere in the Bible does it indicate that this is done by force. We are not to persecute but love. This means we love those who do not believe in the Gospel and we gently demonstrate

love, acts of kindness and words that show the effectiveness of the Gospel. But never hate and confusion.

However, these radical Muslim groups interpret that any attempt to convert one to Christianity has begun persecution of them and is to be punished as an infidel. This has led to hatred of Christians all around the world. The last two wars of the U.S. have been against terrorism. But when we stamp it out in one place it only arises in another. And so, it is a battle that cannot be won by war. That is where this beast will step in, in my opinion. He will come up with a way to stop terrorism and will become a well-respected peace giver to the world. They will accept him and even begin to worship him and his power-giver, the dragon (the devil). Indeed, one who can bring lasting peace in the chaos of terrorism will be a very powerful and respected individual.

They will even begin to worship the dragon. Beware, for we are even now living in times when open devil worship is accepted. One group even says that they don't actually worship the devil but that their mission is to show love apart from the prejudice of religion. But why then do they label it as a church of the devil? Seems deceitful and open to Christian persecution to me.

However, this again, is my opinion and speculation and is not identified as exactly how it will happen in the Bible. I just always want to make that clear.

Some have speculated that he is not a single individual but a system or a government. However, the words of the Bible speak of this beast as a single entity so I believe him to be a man. Who is he? We don't know. It is possible that he is alive right now, because of the signs of the times previously discussed. He has not risen to power yet but I believe that he soon will. As the world deteriorates further and further into sin, disruption and chaos, a powerful individual will be needed to restore peace. This is the rider of the white horse of the four horsemen of chapter 6. Amidst war, cataclysmic events, global warming, the destruction of our atmosphere, terrorism and all else that is going on, somehow, he will emerge with an answer that seems to end the mess and establish peace. Again, verse 3 tells us that all the world will marvel over him and follow him. All the nations, all the powers, all the great and mighty leaders of the world will gladly turn to him and his plan as the solution to the mess we have created for ourselves.

And so, the world that does not know Christ, will worship the dragon and the beast saying things like, "Who is like him?" and "Who could stand against him and make war with him?" The world will give up, give in, and give all power and authority to this beast.

Today the popularity of Christianity is quickly declining. As evolution, the big bang and other theories that exclude God, continue being taught as factual and not simply man's theories, our children are questioning God, turning away from God and even saying things like, "The Bible is just written by men and is a collection of the opinions of man intended to control others." As the population grows farther and farther from God, they become more and more vulnerable and open to teachings that will ultimately open the door for the Anti-christ. The beast will use this Christian-apathy as a basis to spew his

blasphemous words about Jesus Christ, God, the Holy Spirit and the Church, and sadly it will be widely believed and accepted. Verse 7 says that it will digress to the point that he will lead the world in all-out war with the saints during the first 3-1/2 years of the tribulation period. Yes, I know these are not words of victory but the Bible tells us also in verse 7 that he will overcome them and that he will be given authority over every tribe, tongue and nation on the earth. Verse 8 tells us that all who have not had their name written in the Book of Life of the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world, will indeed worship him. *“If anyone has an ear, let him hear”* (7:8) could also be interpreted as “if anyone has understanding let him understand.”

We then see a parenthesis in verse 10 which says, *“He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints.”* (Revelation 7:10). It is assurance that God will exact revenge on this world system, on the beast, and on the dragon.

## **THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH**

On the heels of the dreadful vision of the beast from the sea, as John turns, he sees a second beast coming up from the earth. This beast also has horns, which represents kingdoms, only this time there are only two and he speaks like a dragon. He too is influenced by the dragon, the devil. From the description that follows he is more of a religious leader which leads me to believe that the two horns are religious kingdoms. Following along with the conflict of the world between Islam and Christianity, I believe these two horns will show that this false prophet (so called in Revelation 16:13, Revelation 19:20, and Revelation 20:10) will attempt to unite these two powerful religious systems and lead the world into a unified religion that worships the dragon and the beast.

This beast will do three major things in order to influence, command and demand that the people of earth worship the first beast (the Anti-christ) and the dragon (the devil). The first is manifested in great signs that show super-human ability. He will do many signs (the Bible says “great signs”) one of which is to call fire from the sky in the presence of the people of the earth. These signs will serve to make people believe that this unholy trinity is indeed divine.

Secondly, he will order men to create an image, a statue of the first beast, then make it speak and also cause those who refuse to worship the beast to be killed. This image becomes a very wicked tool of persecution to those refusing to give themselves to the devil, the beast and the new one world religion. The devil has always wanted to be worshipped in the place of God. As we saw from the prophets, this is why he rebelled against God and was driven out of Heaven. It is what he tempted Jesus with in Matthew 4. It will seem that he has finally gotten his wish.

The third thing he will do is to establish a system in which no one will be able to transact business (buy or sell), without the mark of allegiance to the dragon, the anti-christ and the false prophet. This mark will be displayed in either the forehead or right hand. Much speculation about this mark of the beast has been given over the years.

Many have claimed that new technology is indeed that mark, such as the rise of computers, credit cards and micro-chips. In present day, there is much talk of a cashless society which will be required to buy or sell and has the capability of being completely monitored by the government. If this would ever come about, there will be no private transactions of any kind. Without doubt these things will be tools used by the devil to bring this mark about. They are not the mark and in that light are not wrong. The sin and the actual mark will take place when this one world kingdom demands that everyone swear allegiance to these new world leaders.

While I would be very skeptical in taking a microchip in my forehead or right hand in our present economy, unless it is associated with the anti-trinity it cannot be perceived as the mark of the beast. But beware, because a system like that could well be switched over to these evil leaders when they take power and control. This is my opinion and what I will do. You must do what God gives you liberty in your own heart.

All my life I've heard of the mark of the beast and the number 666. It is said in verse 18 that it is the number of a man. While 7 is seen all through the Bible as a number that is associated with God, 6 is one short of God and the number of a man. Why 666, no one really knows except God the Father. It could be three 6's, one for each of the unholy godhead. We probably won't completely understand until it happens. But one thing is for certain, it is the number of the name of the Anti-christ.

We are told in the next chapter (14) that anyone who receives his mark will not make it into the kingdom of God. So be very aware. Be very watchful. It is going to happen. I do think we will know what we are doing if we swear allegiance to this coming world leader. But it will also be a very natural thing to do for those who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior. Be aware. Be cautious. Be informed. Know the Bible. Know Christ. If you do these things, you may suffer temporary suffering and pain, but you will know eternal and blissful life in the coming Kingdom of God.

## Chapter 16

# REAPING OF THE EARTH

*“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.’”*

Revelation 14:14-15

*“Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, ‘Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.’”*

Revelation 13:11



**“The** Lord is coming back.” Those of us who were raised in church, or have been in the church for a long time, have heard these words many times and often. Jesus Himself said, *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* (John 14:3). When He was taken up into Heaven after His resurrection the angels who appeared after He was taken up told those who looked up toward the ascending Christ, *“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”* (Acts 1:11). From the first day of the Church until now the promise of His return has been the foremost wish of each and every dedicated child of God. Every generation of Christians has expectantly proclaimed, “He is coming soon.” We believe it. We live it. We know it.

Doubters have ridiculed, “Why hasn’t He come? It is a false promise. He’s never coming back.” But that is a lie. We who know Him know that the day is coming. We feel it will be soon. But only God knows. It is coming. He is coming. Just wait and see.

## **THE 144,000**

In Revelation 14 we see one more picture that sets the stage before God pours out His wrath on the earth and mankind who have rejected Him and followed the beast. It is the picture of the reaping of the earth. There will be two stages of the reaping. But first we see the 144,000 that were sealed by God in chapter 7. The Lamb (Jesus Christ) Who has opened the seals on the scroll, now stands on Mount Zion in Israel. The 144,000 are standing with Him. They are the “first fruits” of men received up to God. Many have speculated as to who these are. Revelation 7 plainly tells us that they are 12,000 sealed by God from each of the tribes of Israel. Unless we are a Jew from one of these tribes, we cannot be part of that number. There is no prophetic representation, as some have taught. Some think this is the total number that will be taken up to God, while others want to make some spiritual application of them. But the Bible is clear. They are a literal 144,000 Jews chosen by God. They have lived a pure life before God as is ascribed them in their description. I don’t know God’s reason for this number but He has a plan, He is in control and He can do whatever He wants to do. And so, these stand with our Lord on Mount Zion as the earth is reaped.

## **THREE ANGELS**

Three angels fly across the sky each with a different message that is significant to the reaping of the earth. The first angel proclaims the Gospel as if in one last thrust to bring men to Christ before the second half of the Tribulation Period. The Bible says, *“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heave, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people – saying with a loud voice, ‘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.’”* (Revelation 14:6-7).

We aren’t told how many, if any, yield to the Good News of Jesus Christ from their message. I would think a large number. But it is the final preaching of the Gospel. What follows after the first reaping is worth escaping. But Jesus is the only way of escape.

A second angel followed with a different message. He cried, *“Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”* (Revelation 14:8). We have discussed Babylon. It represents all the rebellion against God that has taken place from Nimrod and the tower of Babel all down through the ages. Babylon is the world system that has stood against God. It is man’s prosperity despite God. It is the kingdom of man’s rebellion from beginning to end. And the angel proclaims that it is fallen. It is coming to an end.

The kingdom of man cannot stand against the kingdom of God. From the very beginning when man built the tower at Babel in defiance of God, his attempts never came close to overcoming God. You see God looked down on man’s rebellion. He always looks down. Man’s puny rebellion stands no chance against the Almighty. It will fall. Man’s denying of God’s existence never has and never will hold water against Him.

The announcement of this angel is a prelude to what is coming in chapters 18-19. Babylon, the world system, the world’s way of thinking, the promotion of prosperity over trusting in God, will come to an end and will be judged by God.

The message of the third angel is a bit lengthier. It is a warning to those who reject the final Gospel message of the first angel and of those who choose to stay in the falling Babylon of the second angel. The third angel addresses those who don’t heed the warning and take the mark of the Beast. In chapter 13 this mark is described as a sealing, or something that is placed in or on the forehead or right hand. It is representative of the financial system of the empire of the Beast and is also a sign of allegiance to him. Without it no one will be able to make any financial transactions. There will be no black market for cash.

For many years people thought that for those on the earth during this time, there would be an underground market where business transactions can be made. If that will exist under the regime of the Anti-Christ, it would only be available as a barter system – trading something you have for something someone else has. You see, cash will be worthless. Only electronic funds will be recognized and that is why the mark will work.

We are now looking at leadership that is already promoting a cashless system. If that ever happens you won't even be able to give a monetary gift to a loved one. Any financial transaction will have to be electronic and thus traceable by the government. This isn't to say that what our own government is promoting is the mark of the beast, but that it will pave the way for such a mark.

When the Anti-christ takes power his announcement that all will need the mark in order to transact business is not simply for financial purposes but is a sign of total allegiance to him. The angel says of those who freely take this mark, *"if anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb."* (Revelation 14:9-10).

Once the mark is in place severe persecution of those refusing it will begin. It will be a time of death to those who trust in God. Because they can't buy anything some may die of starvation, some will be mercilessly killed, and others could die of disease. But a voice from heaven told John to write, *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. 'Yes', says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."* (Revelation 14:13). Those who die during this time will be able to rest because they will be transported straight to Heaven where they will rest until the time for the proclaiming of the New Heaven and New Earth.

## **THE FIRST REAPING**

*"Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.' So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped."* (Revelation 14:14-16).

And here it is. As we quoted from Acts 1 a bit ago, here is Jesus descending on the clouds just as the angels prophesied. This time He isn't the humble servant but a royal king. He has a crown atop His head to show His royalty. In His hand is the sickle with which He will reap His people from the earth. This is the long awaited second coming. All those who know Christ, have lived for Him and are ready to go by being washed white in the blood of the Lamb will be taken from the earth. They will be spared from the outpouring of God's wrath just as has been prophesied.

If I am alive when this happens, if I am still on the earth, I want to be ready for this first reaping. I want to go. I want to be taken from this earth by the risen, glorified Savior. I want to be caught up with Him when He comes to take us off this place before God's full wrath is poured upon those left behind. I may not be here. I may go by way of death before. But if I am alive, I want to be ready. I hope you are too. Trust me, you want to go in this first reaping, not the next one that is about to be described.

## THE SECOND REAPING

We see another angel emerging from the temple that is in Heaven who also bears a sickle. Yet another angel comes from the altar who has power over fire (the altar was the place of burnt offerings). He instructed the angel with the sharp sickle, *“Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.”* (Revelation 14:18). The angel did as he was instructed, throwing the “harvest” into the great winepress of the wrath of God. We are told that the winepress was trampled outside the city squeezing out blood “up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

This is in prelude to the coming chapter regarding the bowl judgements of God’s wrath. Some think this will take place during the battle of Armageddon, and this is possibly true. We aren’t told for sure. The point is that it will result in great death.

The horses’ bridle would stand about five to six feet from the ground, and one thousand six hundred furlongs would measure approximately 180 miles. That’s a lot of blood. That’s a lot of death.

The Anti-christ, for the most part will command the armies of the earth. If this does take place in the Battle of Armageddon it means that the army of Heaven will wipe out most of those standing in rebellion, standing loyal to the Beast.

This will be a hard time for mankind as will be revealed in more detail in the next chapter. Please, take warning, don’t be deceived into being a part of this satanic leader. Even now people are being fooled into believing the lies of the Babylonian system. It will culminate in the wrath of God and death.

## Chapter 17

# THE WRATH OF GOD

*“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.”*

Revelation 15:1

**God** is love (1 John 4:8, 10). That is the God we want to think of. Yes indeed, He is love. There is no greater love than God. He loved mankind so much that He became God in the flesh, His Son, Jesus Christ, to make the way for us to escape the curse we brought upon ourselves in the Garden of Eden. When we couldn't fix our sin, He made the way to fix it for us.

But by and large man has rejected God's provision. Oh, of course there are millions who have turned to God. But remember, as of this writing there are around eight billion people on this planet. Millions is a small number compared to billions. Man has chosen to worship false gods, or become atheists without a belief in God at all. The world has chosen to live without God. He has outrightly defied God.

God has been patient all these centuries. However, He has always promised that His wrath would be poured out on mankind and in Revelation 15, it is ready to happen. Men have chosen to live as they willed, performing every type of abominable sin they could image. They say that if God is love then He will accept people in their sin. But He won't. Read the words of Paul in Ephesians 5:6, *"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things [in the verses prior, several sins are listed] the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."* Again, he writes in Colossians 3:6, *"Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience."* God will do it and it is inevitable. Coming to Him through Christ is the only escape.

In chapter 14, the first reaping was that of removing those who had become Christians from the Earth. This is because God has promised that He will not pour out His wrath on His people (Romans 5:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:9). Those alive during the first three- and one-half years of the tribulation period will be persecuted, sought out like criminals and executed by Anti-christ. But before God takes His final vengeance, those still remaining will be taken out and God's wrath poured out like never before in the history of man.

After introducing the seven angels holding the seven last plagues to be poured out on mankind, we see once again the sea of glass. It first appeared in Revelation 4:6. There, it was an empty, immense crystal floor before the throne of God. After the reaping we are given this description of this area before God, *"And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image*

*and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.”* (Revelation 15:2). Those reaped from the Earth are now standing before God. They sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb which goes like this, *“Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O king of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.”* This is the time they have been waiting for. This is the reward for the patience of the saints. Mankind is finally rescued from destruction!

## **GOLDEN, DEADLY BOWLS**

After this glorious reunion before God’s throne, John looked, and saw the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in Heaven was opened. From it emerged seven more angels who had the seven plagues. They were clothed in pure, bright linen garments with a golden band or belt around their waists. Remember the four living creatures from chapter 4? One of them gave each of the seven angels a bowl. In these bowls was the full wrath of God – God who lives forever and ever.

The temple in Heaven was then filled with the smoke of the glory of God as a result of His power – it was like God was flexing His muscles in preparation of what was to come. His glory was so strong that no one was able to enter this temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. All the power of the Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet was like a puff of smoke compared to the glory of the Almighty, Glorious, Awesome God!

Revelation 16:1 tells us that a loud voice came from the temple in Heaven issuing the order to the angels with the bowls to *“Go and pour out the of the wrath of God on the earth.”* The Concordant Literal Version reads, *“Go and pour out the seven bowls of the fury of God into the land.”* Because of the glory of God, no one else is in the temple except Him, so this voice must be that of the Almighty, All-Powerful God Himself!

## **BOWL ONE (Revelation 16:2)**

The first bowl of God’s wrath is poured out on the Earth and everyone who had taken the mark of the beast and had worshipped his image suddenly developed what the Bible calls “a foul and loathsome sore.” In the original Greek the word “loathsome” can also be interpreted as “malignant.” All those who have rebelled against God, siding with the beast now has a malignant, ulcer-like open sore on their bodies.

The Bible doesn’t tell us just where these sores broke out but my guess would be where they had the mark. If that would be the case, then just imagine, all those beautiful people now with a horrible, probably smelly, loathsome sore on their right hand or, worse yet, in their forehead. With each bowl the glory of the system of Babylon becomes darker and more undesirable. It’s luster fades with each, revealing it for the horrible mess it really is.

## **BOWL TWO (Revelation 16:3)**

The second angel emptied his bowl on the seas and oceans of the world. It immediately turned into blood – blood like it is spilling from a dead man. Every living aquatic creature in the seas and oceans died. No more luxurious sea food for those of Babylon! Just think of all the disease and the putrid odor coming from the oceans of the world. With each bowl judgment God’s wrath is worked on mankind, and the system of prosperous Babylon grows weaker and less appealing.

## **BOWL THREE (Revelation 16:4-7)**

The third angel’s bowl was poured out on the rivers and springs of water, also turning them into blood. The angel then said, *“You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.”* (Revelation 16:5-7). Another angel from the altar in Heaven then spoke, *“Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”*

No more pure drinking water. We aren’t told how long they had blood to drink but if they became thirsty that was all they had to drink. Think of it – All soft drinks, alcoholic drinks, coffee, tea – It is all processed with water. One would have to be extremely thirsty but if they were, this was what they had to drink.

The angel proclaimed it just and fair because of the blood they had shed of the saints of God. It was their just due. In plain words, “They deserved it.”

## **BOWL FOUR (Revelation 16:10)**

The fourth angel spilled his bowl on the sun and power was granted him to scorch men with fire. We aren’t told if the rays of the sun were intensified or if the Earth’s atmosphere was thinned to the point that the sun became hotter. All we know for certain is that on top of the sores and blood to drink now it was so hot that their skin was scorched – Burned very painfully – with the fire of the sun.

They were hopeless at this point to repent of their sin, and the Bible tells us that instead of trying to repent, they instead blasphemed God’s name, cursing at Him. They did not repent and give Him glory. But they knew beyond a doubt that their torture came from God. No denying God. No questioning God. Only cursing Him and defying Him.

I can’t imagine not being able to repent, to tell God we are sorry. To be hopelessly and helplessly lost is unimaginable. Yet, that was their case.

Note that this is the only time on our planet that man has not had the option of repenting, telling God they are sorry, and receiving grace from the Almighty. I don’t know about you, but to me that is very scary. It means that those left on the Earth at this point



are helplessly and hopelessly lost with no chance of redemption. I can't emphasize enough that if you find yourself faced with accepting the Mark of the Beast or rejecting it with the consequence of death, the best choice is to reject it. Better to die, even horribly, on this planet than to face eternal death – eternal separation from God with absolutely no hope of coming back to Him.

### **BOWL FIVE (Revelation 16:10-11)**

Bowl five is emptied on the kingdom of the Beast (what is meant by the throne of the beast). The brightly lit kingdom is suddenly filled with intense darkness. That means the sun stops shining and all the lights go out. No more well illuminated fun and games but only the darkness. Their pain is so great that they gnawed their tongues because of it. The pain is most likely the result of the combination of the sores and the scorching of the sun.

Still there is no sorrow or repentance to God. Rather, they continue to blaspheme the Almighty. What a sad state. What a horrible end of the inhabitants of the Earth.

### **BOWL SIX (Revelation 16:12-16)**

The outpouring of the bowl of the sixth angel is in preparation for the final bowl. It is dumped on the Euphrates River and we are told that the river dries up. Because of current droughts, the Euphrates River is going down at the time of this writing. Some have attempted to identify this as the predicted drying up of the river in this passage. However, remember that all the water on Earth at this point has turned to blood. Nothing is alive in the river anyway so it is not a great loss when this happens. The purpose for it drying up is to prepare a way for the armies from the East to march to the valley called Armageddon where the battle that has been called "The Great Day of the Lord" will take place.

Thinking it to be a counter-move, the dragon, the beast and the false prophet open their mouths and regurgitate spirits that are described as being like frogs. Why frogs? We aren't really told. However, they are in reality demonic spirits sent from the unholy trinity to call the armies of the world to come together with the armies of the East for the great battle that will be fought here.

Revelation 16:15 is like a parenthesis in the account. It is considered to be the words of Jesus who says, "*Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.*" It is a message to whoever is reading this account to be prepared. Don't let down your guard because He is coming, secretly like a thief. It says to not be caught walking naked lest you are caught in indecency. In other words, "Don't get caught with your pants down."

God allowed them to gather at the appointed destination – Armageddon.

## **BOWL SEVEN (Revelation 16:17-21)**

The final angel spilled his bowl into the air. This is the day when the final judgment of God's wrath is poured out on the Earth. The New King James Version says "It is done." The Concordant Literal Version says "It has occurred." In other words, and in any translation, it means the day has finally arrived. Once again, the words come from within the temple which are the words of God Himself.

As a result of the bowl poured out in the air, there are noises (or voices), thunder and lightning, and the worst earthquake the world has ever known. It was so great that the great city (Jerusalem) was split into three parts. The earthquake is a world-wide event as we are told that the cities of all the nations fell. The Bible tells us that Babylon – the world system – is remembered by God, not in a good way but like "now it's your turn." What God remembered was that it was time to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

Again, as a result of this bowl, all the great mountains were apparently flattened because we are told "they were not found." And the Islands of the oceans are "fled away" or again not found. Finally, a hailstorm of the greatest magnitude ever is rained on the Earth. Hail weighing a talent falls on mankind. The talent weighed somewhere between 60 to 110 lbs. So, even the small ones were deadly. The world has never seen such a storm.

Once again, there was no repentance from men. People in their last moment continued to blaspheme God. Babylon has come to an end and the next two chapters tell us about it in detail.

## Chapter 18

# BABYLON HAS FALLEN

*“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’”*

Revelation 17:1

**War** is a terrible thing. War is fought to determine which world leader is right or wrong in most cases. Many people lose their lives in war, and might doesn't always prove right. At the end of Revelation 16 we saw the sixth bowl judgment gathering all the armies of the world to Armageddon for the final conflict of mankind. The seventh bowl judgment ended with a great earthquake from God which leveled the mountains and sank the islands of the Earth. Finally, 60–100-pound hailstones fall from the sky killing many and leaving those still alive after war and judgment from God, blaspheming and cursing the Maker of everything.

Beginning in chapter 17 we see the judgment of the great harlot – Babylon – the world system that has stood against God. The seemingly prosperous world order has existed since the devil rebelled against God in Heaven. He has always enticed man to look away from God and seek his own gain, materially, spiritually, and physically. God allows it because of the freewill, or free choice, He gave to men. Before each of us is set the decision whether to follow God (which, incidentally, can also be prosperous in its own way), or to follow the frill, the bling, and the enticing success offered by the world system.

In the next two chapters of Revelation, we see that system finally falling and being judged for what it really is. All who have followed it, sought it, and rebelled against God in favor of it, will see its destruction. In Revelation 17:1-6 we see one of the angels who had poured out the bowl judgments telling John to go with him and he would show him the judgment of the great harlot that sits on many waters, with whom the world leaders commit fornication, not physically but in rebellion against God and with the devil. Those living on the Earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. This is all symbolic of falling in with this world order.

Being carried away in the Spirit refers to being given a vision showing what this new world order has done. He witnesses this world system in the form of a harlot riding the scarlet beast (the Anti-christ). It is certainly the Anti-christ as described by the seven heads and ten horns. These are described in more detail in this chapter. We are told that the heads are seven mountains and are also seven kings. The ten horns are also kings who had not yet received power.

She is clothed in royal apparel (purple and scarlet), adorned with gold and other precious stones and pearls. In her hand is a golden cup that is filled with abominations

and the filthiness of her fornication. On her forehead her identification is written: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. Finally, we are told that she is drunk on the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. Her horror is so great that John marvels in amazement.

These things are all representative as identified by the angel (Revelation 17:7). Verses 8-18 explain what each representation is.

## **THE BEAST**

*“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not and yet is.”* (Revelation 17:8). In this passage and what follows we are given a more detailed description of the beast. The words “was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition” indicate that he lived at one time, then was dead, and is alive again. This is also supported back in chapter 13 which says that he had a deadly wound to the head and had been revived. We are not told who the beast is, just what to look for. Perhaps he is a man alive right now somewhere on the Earth that will be of influence, assassinated and brought back to life. Maybe he is some historical, well-known figure who will appear to be resurrected. We are not specifically told. But we are told enough to know that if any one of these two emerge in power and popularity, are killed by a deadly head-wound, and then brought back to life, we can recognize him for who he actually is.

The seven heads are interpreted as being two-fold. First, they are seven mountains. This could refer to the seven hills upon which the original city of Rome was built. From it proceeded the Roman Empire. If this is so, then the kingdom of Anti-christ will be that of a revived Roman Empire. This is entirely possible because the mountains are also identified as being seven kings or empires. This could be referring to the world kingdoms that lead up to the Roman Empire (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece, with Rome being the seventh). This is somewhat supported in that the Bible says in 17:10 that five are fallen (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece), one is (at the time John saw the vision Rome was still in power). Then we are told that the Beast is of the seven (again, possibly the revived Roman Empire), but is also the eighth (referring to the empire of the anti-trinity), and is going to perdition (into destruction).

There are also ten horns. The Bible tells us in 17:12 that these are also kings, possibly world leaders under the Anti-christ who are appointed over world districts. These will be completely loyal to the Beast. They will also be commanders of the armies of the Empire of the Beast and will make war with the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Of course, our Lord will conquer them all because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are called, chosen and faithful (most likely referring to the 144,000 but could also include us who are saved).

## THE HARLOT

The description moves to the Harlot. The waters from which she came is, by Biblical identification, the peoples, nations and kingdoms of the Earth before the Empire of the Anti-christ. The ten world leaders under the Beast will hate her. They will want to establish a new order, different from the world system that has reigned on the fallen world for so long. The Anti-christ will purpose to set up a completely new system (indicated by his own mark and financial system). As a result, the current world system, referred to as the harlot and Babylon, will fall. The new world leaders will destroy it as described in 17:16, making "her" desolate, naked, and will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. This is uncannily, influenced by God and is His plan for the end of the reign of the devil, sin and death. They will do this until His plan is fulfilled.

## THE FALL OF BABYLON

Another angel from Heaven, with great authority, came illuminating with his glory. With a very loud voice his message is clear: *"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become the dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!"* (Revelation 18:2). All the nations of the Earth have been made drunk on the wine of the wrath of her fornication. In other words, the world system of Babylon has infected the entire world. It isn't that God is against prosperity, but that the desire for prosperity without God is rebellion.

As in another parenthesis, another voice cries out, *"Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."* It is a warning to us to not compromise with the world system, its way of wealth, its way of fame, and its desire to conquer and shed blood. God has remembered her sin and is bringing down wrath on that world system that has reigned in sin since the fall of man.

She has boasted in herself saying that she is a queen, and no widow and will not see sorrow. But God in one day, or one swoop, will bring destruction to her. She will be eliminated as God prepares to purge the world and once and for all, redeem it back to Himself.

Revelation 18:9-19 describes the weeping and sorrow of those left on Earth of the destruction of Babylon. In her they had found their riches, their delicacies and the system that is falling is described in detail. The "city" – the world system which has made man rich aside from God, is come to an end.

Verse 20 describes the victory of those in God. It says, *"Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"*

The finality of the fall of Babylon is found in the words that conclude chapter 18. It says, *"Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, 'thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be"*

*heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and all who were slain on the earth.”* (Revelation 18:21-24).

## Chapter 19

# A GREAT SUPPER AND THE FINAL VICTORY OF CHRIST

*“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And he who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.”*

Revelation 19:11



**W**e love to celebrate. We celebrate life land-marks such as birthdays and anniversaries. We celebrate graduations from high school, college, and from training accomplishments in life. And, we celebrate victories that have been won.

In Revelation 19:1-5 we see all of Heaven rejoicing in celebration – celebration of the fall of the world system of Babylon. It has been long in coming. We have looked for it since Adam fell in Eden. It has finally been accomplished and all of heaven rejoices. It is a loud noise – the united voices of a multitude. Those of us who have been faithful to our Lord are part of that great multitude. We will all lift our voices in unison saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are his judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.” (Revelation 19:1-2).

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures also get in on the praise session crying out, “Amen! Alleluia!” Finally in this most magnificent praise session, a voice comes from the throne – perhaps that of our own Lord, Jesus Christ, saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear him, both small and great!”

It is right to celebrate, for it is the end of Satan’s reign of terror, and it is the beginning of a New Age in Christ our Lord. This is a day to be looking forward to. A day to finally celebrate!

## **THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB**

Most of those among us who are part of the Church have heard of this great upcoming event. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb. It is the feast celebrating the upcoming wedding of Christ to His bride. It takes place before the battle with the armies of the Earth (as seen in the coming verses of chapter 19). This feast is something similar to a banquet held as a reception for the newly wed couple. How wonderful it will be to finally be in the presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and to sit as invited guests at the table of His wedding feast.

He calls those invited “blessed.” We will be blessed – made happy – because we will be present at that feast – all those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus

Christ. Compare this with the words of Jesus in the parable of the ten virgins awaiting the wedding in Matthew 25. These are those who are supposed to be members of the wedding party who are waiting for the bridegroom to arrive. There were five wise virgins and five foolish virgins. The wise had taken extra oil for their lamps just in case there was a long wait. Because of their thoughtfulness they had plenty of oil to last until the bridegroom arrived. But the foolish only took enough oil to last for the wedding event only. When the bridegroom finally showed up the foolish didn't have enough oil and when they rushed out to get more, by the time they got back the bridegroom had arrived and they were not allowed in.

According to this parable and the Book of Revelation, we are not the bride. A peek into Revelation 21 reveals that the bride is actually the New Jerusalem coming down from God (see particularly Revelation 21:2 and 9). The parable of Jesus agrees with this because we are the virgins not the bride. The foolish virgins have only interest enough for the day and aren't really looking ahead in their salvation experience. The question would arise if they were truly saved or just in possession of a head knowledge. The wise virgins who took enough oil represent those who have truly been born again and are ready regardless how long it takes for the bridegroom to arrive. We'll discuss the topic of the bride further in Revelation 21.

John was so excited because of the vision of the marriage supper that he fell down in worship of his messenger. The messenger quickly told him to get up for he himself was a fellow servant, a brother in Christ having the testimony of Jesus. His words, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" point out that it is the witness of Jesus, His message through us, is the spirit (small "s" meaning not the Holy Spirit but more the inspiration) of the prophecy.

## **THE ARRIVAL OF CHRIST**

Suddenly in the vision the sky was rolled back (heaven opened) and a white horse upon which sat a Rider who was called "Faithful" and "True." This is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw another rider of a white horse in chapter 6. This turned out to be the Anti-christ because the white horse represented peace, however a false peace because the following horses represented war, then famine and finally death. That is what the Anti-christ will bring.

But this rider of this white horse is genuinely faithful and true. He is filled with righteousness and He judges and makes war. He is described as having eyes like a flame of fire (also Revelation 1:14), and wearing many crowns on His head. He had a name written that no one knew except Him and He was clothed in a robe that had been dipped in blood (His crucifixion – The Lamb as it had been slain). His name is called the Word of God (John 1:1-4). This is without doubt our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

He is followed by the armies of Heaven. We aren't told just who these armies consist of. Perhaps us. Perhaps the 144,000, maybe the angelic host. Whoever they

are, they follow, all of them also riding white horses. They are clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

From His mouth issues a sharp sword (Revelation 1:16) and it is the weapon used to strike and defeat the nations whom He is coming to fight. He will rule them with a rod of iron, which is referring to His reign as we will see in Chapter 20. He is treading the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of God Almighty. Finally, He has a name written on His robe and thigh which says “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” He is none other than Jesus Christ – the Lion/Lamb, the One and Only who will finally and once for all bring order from the chaos, life out of death, and the long-awaited salvation for His creation.

## **THE DEFEAT OF THE ARMIES OF THE WORLD**

The final days of the reign of anti-christ see all the armies of the world gathered together for Earth’s final battle. This is the battle of Armageddon as we previously saw all the armies of the world gathering at one spot. It is most likely the place where the blood will flow as deep as the horses bridles. We’ve already talked about these two things. The emphasis here is that they are not fighting each other but have gathered in final defiance of the armies of Heaven. Verse 17 calls it the “supper of God” because it is a great slaying of men. An angel that stood in the sun (most likely in front of the sun) calls the birds of the sky (the predator birds) to gather for a great feast on the flesh of men. All will be treated the same, whether soldier or officer, slave or king, rich or poor.

We often think of Hell as the place of eternal flames – here called the Lake of Fire. It isn’t the same. The Lake of Fire is the final place of torment for all who have stood in disobedience, unbelief, rebellion and sin against God. We see the first two to be placed there namely the Beast – the Anti-christ –who will be captured along with his false prophet – the second beast who seems to be the “religious figure.” They are then cast alive into the Lake of Fire that burns with brimstone. The rest of the armies were killed with the sword that proceeded from the mouth of the Rider of the White Horse.

This is a terrible time. But it is the culmination of the outpouring of the wrath of God. Praise be to Him that those who have stood faithful to Christ, many of whom have been slain by the Anti-christ and his irreverent reign, will not undergo God’s wrath. They and we will be taken out before this awful and terrible event.

Chapter 19 ends with the words, “and all the birds were filled with their flesh.” What a gory ending. Folks, those who reject Jesus Christ and take the mark of the beast have only this to look forward to.

# **FINAL THINGS**

## Chapter 20

# ONE THOUSAND YEARS

*“ . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”*

Revelation 20:4

*I was* twenty-five years old. I sat at the conference table where a few other guys were around my age, but most were in their fifties and sixties. As we went around the table, each telling their experiences in the insurance industry, I began to see a pattern. Most of these guys had worked for the company for twenty to thirty plus years. I felt small in the company of those men. It came my turn. I had been with the company going on one year. Instead of having “war” stories to tell, I had been bathed in their stories and I said, “Frankly I feel honored and humbled in the presence of these men, because most of them have served the company longer than I have been alive!”

Yet now, many years later, as I write, I am now sixty-nine. I look back on life, and I’ve had a good one, but I wonder, “Where did all those years go?” It seems like yesterday when I made that statement in front of those elder gentlemen. But now most of them, if not all, are dead and gone, and I find myself in their place. No, I haven’t sold insurance all that time. In fact, my insurance career ended just a couple of years after that. But now I have my own “war” stories to tell.

Time with God is much different than it is with us. My puny sixty-nine years are nothing in the presence of One who is eternal, who knew no beginning and knows no end. The time in Revelation 20 spans more than one thousand years, but is summarized in only one chapter.

## **THE DEVIL BOUND**

Revelation 20:1-3 tells us of one glorious time. Can you imagine for an instant, a time when the temptations of the devil, his evil influence on the world and the sin that he has influenced, gone for one thousand years? That is exactly what this period, popularly referred to as the Millennial Reign, talks about.

We are told that Jesus Christ has the keys to death and hades (Revelation 1:18). We aren’t told if the bottomless pit is the same as hades or not, so we won’t speculate about that. We will just go with what the Bible says, that an angel came down who had the keys to this bottomless pit (stop and think ... our finite minds could never imagine, but a pit that allows you to fall without end). Whether this angel is Christ or another of the important messengers from Heaven, he lays hands on the dragon, described further as the Devil and Satan, and binds him with a great chain, casting him into this bottomless pit

where he will remain until the end of this thousand-year period. The pit is shut up and sealed so there is no escape for the dragon.

## **ONE THOUSAND YEARS WITH CHRIST**

We need to realize that this will be a strange time. It is strange because very few have taught all the Bible says about this period. It tells us in verse 3 that the nations will not be deceived by this dragon any longer, until the end of the thousand-year period. John further states that in this vision he saw thrones and those sitting on them were committed to be judges. Who do they judge? Again, look at verse 3; it says the nations. Those who are listed in verses 4-5 are without doubt those who have died in Christ and been resurrected. They are those who had been beheaded for their witness of Jesus and for the word of God. Also, those who refused the mark of the beast. This is all born-again Christian believers.

These are called “the first resurrection.” It includes all who have been saved by grace and washed in the blood of the Lamb. The Bible says that “over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

However, by mentioning “the nations” there are others there. They are those who were not killed in the final war. Those who may not have been soldiers, but simply citizens. It will be a strange, perhaps unimaginable time during which there will be resurrected Christians and mortal people, living on the same planet for the thousand-year period. Jesus Christ will be the king that rules with a rod of iron, commanding and demanding peace and submission.

Isaiah describes this time in Isaiah 11:1-12 and 65:17-25. Let’s look at those passages. Isaiah 11:1-12 says, *“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ‘And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.’ It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt,*

*from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”*

*Also, Isaiah 65:17-25: “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people; and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer, and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain.’ Says the LORD.”*

This thousand-year reign will begin with a somewhat renewed atmosphere and earth. Remember it has been devastated by the wrath of God. But the LORD will refresh the earth, all that is in it, and refresh the destroyed and polluted heavens (atmosphere). Those who are the first resurrection will live and reign with Christ over this remodeled planet. We know that mortals will be there because Isaiah speaks of long life but also of death. However, the wild nature of the beasts of the earth will now be peaceful like when God made the Garden of Eden. We are told that young children will play near the hole of the cobra and put their hands in the dens of once poisonous vipers. The lion will no longer be the dreaded hunter and killer but will graze on straw and the bear and cow will feed together as well as the lion cub and lamb.

During this time also, God will assemble all the lost tribes of the nation of Israel. Those who have been dispersed and perhaps forgotten their Jewish heritage will once again reunite with the rest of God’s chosen people. As previously said, it will be a strange time, but also a glorious time as sin is not a factor on the earth and men again live together in peace.

## **REBELLION**

Because of the presence of mortal men on the Earth who have never been tempted by sin (remember Satan has been bound in the bottomless pit), Satan is loosed for a season to tempt and deceive those nations still on Earth. He will succeed in raising a great army referred to as Gog and Magog. It is a great army, described as having a number as vast as the sand of the sea. They encompassed the camp of the saints and the beloved city (Jerusalem). This battle is also described and prophesied by Ezekiel in chapters 38 and 39 of the Book of Ezekiel. Some think this prophecy will take place just



before the coming of the Lord and will usher in the reign of the Anti-christ. But it more closely describes this time described at the end of the thousand-year reign. Note that both in the battle described in Ezekiel and in Revelation 20:7-10, when the armies of Satan surround the camp and city God sends fire from Heaven and devours the opposing armies.

Then the deceiving devil is cast into the Lake of Fire where the beast and false prophet have been for one thousand years. In this place they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Now the devil is no more. Now the end of man's reign on Earth is finally over and it is now time for eternity future to begin. There is just one more thing to be done.

## **JUDGEMENT OF THE GREAT WHITE THRONE**

This judgment has been misrepresented by many. It has been taught and believed that everyone, saved and unsaved, will be judged at this judgment. This is totally untrue. The believers in Christ were judged for their sin when they accepted Christ as Savior and were symbolically buried and resurrected in Him. Then we are judged for our works, not to decide whether we are saved or lost, but to determine our reward in Heaven when we are united with Christ at what the Bible calls "The Judgment Seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Those that will be judged at the Great White Throne will be those who are still dead. This is the second resurrection. All the saints and righteous of God have been taken up in the first resurrection. Revelation 20:11-15 tell us that the dead in the sea and those in death and Hades (the holding place of the unrighteous dead) give up all those in them and they all stand before God who sits on this Great White Throne. His presence is so great that we are told the earth and the heaven flee away, and no place is found for them. This most likely corresponds with the burning of the earth as found in 2 Peter 3:10.

John saw all those wicked people, now resurrected, standing before the throne of God's judgment. The books were opened, one book is The Book of Life, in which the names of those ready for Heaven appear. The other books are the volumes that record the deeds of these wicked dead. They are judged according to these things. Again, note that we are not saved by good works which is another reason that we as believers are not there to be judged.

Imagine if you will, it is a reading of every single person not ready for Heaven. Everything they have done is read back to them; their lives replayed. It isn't so much as evidence for God, because He is omniscient – He already knows, but it is to show them that they have actually sealed their own fate. They have made their choices in life. It isn't God sending them to the Lake of Fire but they have, by their own decisions, made the choice for the Lake of Fire.

Then we are told that after all have been judged that Death and Hades – All those in this second resurrection, are cast into the Lake of Fire. It is the second death, only it

is not a final death, but an eternal death. All not found written in the Book of Life are put into the Lake of Fire. What a sad day. What a day of screaming, mourning, trying to now repent but finding no forgiveness. I can't even imagine the horror.

I stop here to plead with any reading this who don't know Jesus Christ as Savior. Please, please, please take this moment to come to Him. Confess Him as Lord of your life. Repent of your sin and ask forgiveness before it is too late. You don't want to face God in this judgement. It will not end good for you. Do it now, while you have time.

## Chapter 21

# ALL THINGS NEW

*“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.”*

Revelation 21:1

**O**ver the years I have known many good, true born-again believers who have had only one thing on their minds – Making it to Heaven, longing to see what John saw in his vision in these next two chapters. Believe me, it is real and it is coming. It has been God’s plan all along to bring us into the moment we are going to discuss over these last pages.

We saw in the last chapter that when God sat on that great, white throne that the earth and heaven fled away. It had to in order to make way for what was coming in chapter 21. With the old planet and its atmosphere gone, God made a new planet Earth and an entirely new atmosphere.

The Bible doesn’t say this but here is what I believe and what I hope for – This new planet will be just as it was when God first created the Earth and all in it. It will be like the Garden of Eden with the curse gone (Revelation 22:3). As during the thousand-year reign, the creatures God made are at peace with each other, nor more killing, no more feeding on other creatures. All will be restored and we will live as God originally intended – forever! That’s my take.

With that being said, here is what the Bible does say: First the Earth is re-created. The atmosphere is new and will be immediately recognized as God’s creation breathes it in. However, there is no more sea. It will all be one giant land mass. It is the true bride of Christ for the Bible says, *“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’”* (Revelation 21:2, 9). This holy city, the New Jerusalem, is the bride of Christ. Look it up. You will find many references to Christ as the bridegroom, but only these two verses that actually identify who the bride is. Now it also stands to reason that a city is a city because of the people who actually live there. But it is not just the Church, but also those redeemed Jews. So more accurately the bride is all that makes up the city – the New Jerusalem.

Here is the best news: *“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.’”* (Revelation 21:3). Here is what God is going to do first (and it is just the beginning):

- (1) He will wipe away every tear from our eyes
- (2) There shall be no more death
- (3) Nor sorrow
- (4) Nor crying
- (5) There shall be no more pain

For the former things have passed away! God Himself, says that *“Behold, I make all things new.”* Talk about new beginnings, wish we could all start over? Halleluiah, we get our wish! God also told John to write because, *“these words are true and faithful.”* (Revelation 21:5), which we could paraphrase as saying “you can count on it!” Jesus, who is the Alpha and Omega (the first letter of the Greek alphabet and the last), the first and the last, said, *“It is finished.”* On the cross He said that it was finished, referring to the payment for redemption. Now He speaks those words again because the whole process, the entire plan has been executed, and it is done!

There are some more things to add to the list above:

- (6) I will give of the fountain of water of life freely to him who thirsts
- (7) He who overcomes shall inherit all things
- (8) I will be his God and he shall be My son

There is a parenthesis at this point. It lists those who will not be allowed in the New Jerusalem. Bear in mind that at this point all who did not have their names in the Lamb’s Book of Life have been cast into the Lake of Fire. That indicates to me that this is a warning to those who practice such things to let them know that these things need to be weeded from their lives. Those who will not be allowed are:

- (1) The cowardly
- (2) The unbelieving
- (3) The abominable
- (4) The murderers
- (5) The sexually immoral
- (6) Sorcerers
- (7) Idolaters
- (8) All liars

These, we are told, will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Remember that this is not a final death but eternal, never-ending death.

## **DESCRIBING THE NEW JERUSALEM**

John is taken by one of the angels who had poured out one of the bowl judgments to a “great and high mountain” where he is shown “the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” Here he witnessed the holy Jerusalem descending from the sky (could this mean that the city was

assembled – being assembled in Heaven? – John 14:2 – Note that the word translated “mansions” in the original language is “abodes” or “places to live.” These are actually rooms in the house of God).

Here is the description of the New Jerusalem that will descend on Earth:

- (1) It has the glory of God
- (2) The light coming from it is like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal (the jasper stone is a semi-precious stone that comes in a variety of colors but in this instance, it is a clear version of it)
- (3) It has 12 gates and high walls
- (4) There is an angel at each gate
- (5) The names of the tribes of Israel are inscribed on them – probably each gate being named after one of these patriarchs
- (6) There are three gates on each side
- (7) The wall of the city has twelve foundations each inscribed by one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb
- (8) The one speaking to John has in his hand a golden measuring reed to use in obtaining the dimensions of the city, the gates and the wall
  - (a) The length was twelve thousand furlongs cubed (length, width and height) which in our measurements would be approximately 1400 miles cubed. Currently our breathable atmosphere extends to around 62 miles up. This means that the newly created atmosphere will be increased to nearly 1400 miles. In comparison the distance from New York City to Miami Florida is 1289 miles. So, it would be nearly as long as the Continental United States.
  - (b) The wall is 144 cubits high or approximately 2580 feet. It is also made of jasper and the city was clear, like crystal.
  - (c) The foundation has twelve layers each made from a different precious stone
    - (1) Jasper
    - (2) Sapphire
    - (3) Chalcedony
    - (4) Emerald
    - (5) Sardonyx
    - (6) Sardius
    - (7) Chrysolite
    - (8) Beryl
    - (9) Topaz
    - (10) Chrysoprase
    - (11) Jacinth
    - (12) Amethyst
  - (d) Each of the twelve gates is constructed of a single pearl (Imagine the size of that oyster!)
  - (e) The street of the city is made of pure gold, so pure that it also is clear like transparent glass.
- (9) The city has no temple because God and the Lamb are the temple.

- (10) There is no need of the sun or moon because God's glory is so bright that it is the source of illumination of the city.
- (11) The Lamb is its light
- (12) The nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.
- (13) The gates are never shut by day, which means they are never shut because there is no night there.
- (14) Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life can enter into it.

## **THE RIVER OF LIFE**

In this New Jerusalem is a river, called "The River of Life." It flows directly from the throne of God and runs through the middle of the street of gold (so that the street is on each side of the river. This is my speculation but if the river flows through the street, then it seems to me that the road probably goes from each gate, meeting into one street that then leads directly to the throne of God, again, my speculation.

On each side of the river is found the Tree of Life. This tree was last seen in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden to keep them from eating from this tree after they had eaten from the forbidden tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. I speculate that the reason for this was that because they had eaten from the forbidden tree in sin, causing the fall of man and the curse on this planet. I believe that if they had eaten of the Tree of Life after this then they would have been given eternal existence but in sin without the hope of salvation. God's act of driving them out of the garden was actually done in mercy and to protect them from eternal damnation.

We aren't told how many of these trees there are but it is spoken of in the singular which could mean that each tree is connected in the root system to all the others thus forming a single tree in multiple locations. The tree is found on both sides of the river, each yielding a different fruit every month.

The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Healing of nations could only refer to bringing them all together in peace. It seems that outside this great and wonderful city there will still be nations, but all united for Christ. No war, only peace for all eternity.

## **NO MORE CURSE**

This is very significant. What this means is that the curse which God was forced to place on the Earth because of man's sin, is now lifted and will be no more. The Earth will finally be what God intended it to be. Again, I can only give you my speculation because our Father, God chose not to tell us anymore. It is my belief that we will be given jobs to do to fulfill man's mandate in Genesis, to rule over, and work the ground. I believe there will be animals there. I believe we will be fulfilled and given the assignment we most desire. It will not be work because the curse is gone. But we will be fulfilled in our

tasks. We won't be just sitting around plucking harps but we will be given meaningful things to do. Again, the Bible says nothing about that but that's what I think.

The thrones of God and the Lamb will be there (at the end of the street and at the beginning of the River of Life) and we His servants shall serve Him. We will see His face. Sometimes it seems that the Bible is confusing regarding seeing God. In the Bible when it says that someone saw God it actually means that they saw God in some form, be it human or a burning bush or whatever, but not in His full glory. In our present form if we actually saw the full glory of God we would immediately die. Our present human form cannot stand in His full glory. But in the New Jerusalem we will be able to look on Him in awe and spender. His name will be on our foreheads showing that we are the property of God.

Again, there will be no night there, no need for artificial light (a lamp), and no need of the sun because the Lord God gives us light. And finally, we will reign with Him forever and ever.

What a glorious time. We can't miss it, or we shouldn't. And we don't have to. You only have to be saved, born-again, submitted to God here and now and you can assure yourself a room in this holy, wonderful city.



## Chapter 22

# COME LORD JESUS

*“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”*

Revelation 22:20

A little over nineteen hundred years ago, John, a prisoner on the then prison island of Patmos, was given this vision. It has mystified men ever since. We have been given books promoting many different types of interpretation. John himself assured his readers that his testimony of this vision was true and reliable. I believe him. He was one of the chosen Apostles of Jesus Christ. His name will be on one of those foundations.

He promised a blessing to those who read the prophesy, and do His (the Lord Jesus) commandments. Many today shun the book. Many pastors and preachers avoid talking about it because they think it confusing. But it is a blessing because God chose to allow John to see the vision to let us know what is coming and how to live until it does. It also shows us that in the end, we really do win in Christ Jesus. John was told to not seal up the book – or keep it a secret – because God wants us to know what is coming and what the end will be.

There is a warning given in Revelation 22:18-19. I won't comment but quote the warning so that it is clear: *“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”* I believe that is completely understandable requiring no further explanation.

Jesus spoke four times in this chapter. Here's what He said:

Revelation 22:7 – *“Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the word of the prophecy of this book.”*

Revelation 22:12-13 – *“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”*

Revelation 22:16 – *“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”*

Revelation 22:20 – *“Surely I am coming quickly.”*

The message of all four is the same. He is coming very soon. John believed this 1900 years ago. Throughout the ages of the Church, it has always been believed. Because we mark time differently than God. We have done similar to what the people of Israel did when Moses was forty days and nights atop Mt. Sinai, getting the Law and instructions of God. They felt that something had happened to him and so even before they got good and started, they sinned against God breaking the very first commandment "*You shall have no other gods before Me.*" (Exodus 20:1). This was spoken from Heaven by God in the hearing of all the people of Israel. After forty days and nights, they grew tired of waiting for Moses to return from the top of Mt. Sinai and enticed Aaron into making them the golden calf, proclaiming it to be the god who had taken them from Egypt. That's what happens when we grow tired of waiting. Just as Moses came down from the mountain and found them worshipping this pagan image so the day will come when the prophecies of Revelation will begin to take place and men will be caught in their sin.

"*Quickly*" is on God's time-table, not ours. But know this for certain, He is coming. It will happen. The question then at hand is, "are you ready?" Are you prepared for the day of His coming? Will you be able to resist if we are placed in the situation of receiving the mark of the beast in order to pay your bills and eat? Know for sure that it is coming. The day will arrive.

Those of us who are saved, are born-again children of God, echo the words written that the Spirit of God and the bride say "Come!" Those who have heard and heeded the warnings of this prophecy also say, "Come!" He who is thirsty for the water of life is allowed to take of it freely, but it only comes when we accept Him.

In his closing statements of the book of the vision he saw, John says, "*Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*" In conclusion to this book, I have to ask you again, "Are you ready?" The time is at hand. I believe we are seeing warning signs even now. I believe there are things happening like birth pains to a woman in labor. It isn't to be taken lightly. Jesus is coming.

Once again, I echo the words of my grandfather, Willie Colwell. I remember him saying that the coming of the Lord is just around the corner. I not only believe that but I add that in the day in which we are living, the Lord has rounded the corner and is standing at the door, poised to knock. What will be your response to the message of the Gospel. Will you heed the warnings and revelations of this book? You decide.