BIBLICAL PROPHECIES
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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PREFACE

The Bible is unique. It is the only book that has the answers to the basic questions of life and claims to be written by the true God. This book tells humanity who its Creator is, why it was created, and its ultimate destiny.

Although the Bible reveals the awesome purpose for human existence, it does so in a carefully coded message. The studies that we present reveal much of what is contained in these messages that has not been taught or understood since the demise and disappearance of the early church as a powerful spirit filled entity.

OUR GOALS

Our primary goal is to share our knowledge and understanding of the Sovereign God's plan and purpose for humanity with those who are interested in living their lives according to the law of God, not by the dictates and traditions of men. Our secondary goal is to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God as a warning and a witness to humanity before the Messiah returns to rule the earth.

We hope that you will find this study of God's word intellectually challenging and spiritually enlightening and beneficial.

If you want to know more about us, the work we are doing, or how you can participate in our biblically based educational and research projects, contact us at: www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net

Sincerely,
B. L.Cocherell
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INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL PROPHECIES
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

The Bible is full of prophecies that speak of unimaginable pain and suffering that the Creator God says he is going to pour out on his human creation before he returns to establish his Father’s government on earth. But why would the loving God who gave his life for humanity as the Messiah want to inflict the kind of pain, agony, and terror that is spoken of throughout the Bible as the “wrath of God”? And if this wrath of God is inevitable, when will it come and what does God hope to accomplish through it?

THE REASONS

There are many positive things that God hopes to accomplish through the massive destruction of much of the earth and the annihilation of most of its inhabitants. However, his reasons for bringing his wrath upon humanity and the positive outcome that will come through this devastation can only be understood if we first understand his purpose for human creation.

In the Beginning

When humanity was created, God planned for people to prosper under his guidance and eventually become sons of God and enter into the Family and Kingdom of God as spirit-beings. However, when we review the Genesis record we find that the first two humans rebelled against God and rejected his plan through which they and their descendants could fulfill his purpose for them (Gen.3:1-23; 4:1-7). This rejection of God and his plan has continued from the time of Adam and Eve to this very day:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And God was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it caused him great sorrow of heart. And he said, I will destroy humanity whom I have created and wipe them from the face of the earth: both humanity, and beasts, and the creeping things and the birds of the air; for I am sorry that I have made them" (Gen.6:5-7 Para.).
Here, we see that the Creator God was grief-stricken and extremely discouraged because of the wickedness of people and their rejection of him and the opportunity that he had offered them. Because they chose the way of evil over the way of good and would not change from their wicked lifestyles, God decided to kill them all except for Noah and his family. It is a sad commentary on the human race that, out of its hundreds of millions and perhaps billions of inhabitants, Noah was the only righteous individual God could find on the planet.

The Israelites

Centuries after God had destroyed all but eight people in a great flood, he chose the Israelitish descendants of his friend Abraham to begin the next phase of his plan through which humanity could become sons of God and enter into the Family and Kingdom of God (Ex.19:5-6; Deut.7:6-9). However, these people also rejected God and his plan to save them from eternal death (Jer.3:1-25).

The Messiah

Over nineteen centuries ago, the Sovereign God sent the Redeemer to offer an easier and more perfect method by which humanity could obtain eternal life, become his sons, and enter into his Family and Kingdom (Heb.10:1-21). When God's Son, in the personage of Jesus Christ, proclaimed the good news of his Father's awesome and wonderful offer to the Jews, they not only rejected this offer but also murdered him for bringing them this good news (Acts 2:23-32).

After the murder of the Messiah (the Creator God incarnate), God the Father chose people for the purpose of proclaiming his plan for the salvation of humanity. He also had his plan published in almost every language on earth in hopes that some would heed his good news message. However, history has shown that since the death and resurrection of his Son, most who have heard this message have rejected it.

THE WRATH OF GOD

The wrath of God that will be poured out upon the earth and its inhabitants will bring an end to about six thousand years of his patience in dealing with rebellious people and their evil ways. God's chosen people, Israel, along with the rest of humanity have shown throughout the centuries that they cannot and/or will not live righteously or govern themselves fairly and equitably. Therefore, he will bring an end to human rule and institute a new order for the purpose of furthering his plan and purpose for his human creation.

The earth and its inhabitants are about to enter into a new and different relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. However, prior to this new order and new relationship, God will pour out his wrath upon his chosen people (Israelites scattered throughout the nations) and the rest of humanity because of their great wickedness.
Israel and Judah Punished

"Hear the word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of the families of the earth: Therefore, I will punish you for all of your lawlessness" (Am.3:1-2 Para.). See also Isa.30:1-14; Jer.11:1-19; 30:1-14.

From the very beginning of the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, they have been a constant disappointment to their God because of their rebellion. Throughout the centuries prior to and after the death of king Solomon, God continually urged Israel to obey the covenant that he had made with their ancestors in the wilderness. However, they would not obey; instead, they sought false religious teachers and prophets who would tell them what they wanted to hear and hide the teachings of the true God from them.

Israel has turned their backs on the God of their ancestors, refused to obey him, rejected his good news of salvation, and refused to repent nationally and individually. Therefore, the house of Israel (i.e., the ten scattered tribes) and the house of Judah (the Israelis) will receive the full force of the wrath of God just prior to the end of this age and the return of the Messiah.

Babylon Punished

Since the death of King Solomon, the Babylonian system of government and religion has been embraced by the scattered tribes of Israel and Judah. Because this system is largely responsible for much of Israel's wickedness against God, it is therefore impossible to punish the nations of Israel and the Jews without punishing this Babylonian system and the nations that participate in it. (See Rev.14:8-10; 18:1-14; Jer.chaps. 51-52).

The Nations Punished

Because the tribes of Israel are scattered among the nations of the world and these nations are under Babylonian governmental and religious systems which are in opposition to the true God's governmental and religious system, his wrath will be poured out upon them as well:

"A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with the nations; he will plead with all flesh; he will give those who are wicked to the sword, says the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the farthest parts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be refuse upon the ground" (Jer.25:31-33 KJV).
God says that all nations and their citizens are wicked; therefore, he will punish them and none will be spared. He will cause a great destruction to come upon their cities and kill their peoples as he pours out his wrath during the end of this age:

"Scream in terror, for the Lord's time has come, the time for the Almighty to crush you. Your arms lie paralyzed with fear; the strongest hearts melt, and are afraid. Fear grips you with terrible pangs, like those of a woman in labor. You look at one another, helpless, as the flames of the burning city reflect upon your pallid faces. For see, the day of the Lord is coming. The terrible day of his wrath and fierce anger. The lands shall be destroyed, and all the sinners with it. The heavens will be black above them. No light will shine from stars or sun or moon. And I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sin; I will crush the arrogance of the proud man and the haughtiness of the rich. Few will live when I have finished my work. Men will be as scarce as gold—of greater value than the gold of Ophir. For I will shake the heavens in my wrath and fierce anger, and the earth will move from its place in the skies" (Isa.13:6-13 LBP). See also Isa.26:21.

Evil Spirits Punished

The Bible reveals that a powerful evil spirit known as the Devil (Satan) and other evil spirits have politically, philosophically, and religiously deceived the entire world into rebelling against the true God and his teachings:

"That old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, that deceives [is deceiving] the whole world . . ." (Rev.12:9 Para.). See 2.Cor.11:3-4; 13-15.

Because this evil being and his associates are one of the primary causes of human rebellion against God the Father and Jesus Christ, he will also be punished—first with a thousand years of restraint in the abyss and then with death by fire (Ezk.28:16-19):

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Rev.20:1-3 KJV). See also Isa.24:21-22.
The Days of Noah

Remember that in just over a thousand years after Adam and Eve were created, people had become so wicked that God was sorry that he had made them. This same situation exists today. Look around. This world is an extremely evil place, just as it was prior to the great flood; therefore, God will again bring a great destruction upon the earth and its inhabitants:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually. And God was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it caused him great grief in his heart. And he said, I will destroy humanity whom I have created and wipe them from the face of the earth: both humanity, and beasts, and the creeping things and the birds of the air; for I am sorry that I have made them" (Gen.6:5-7 KJV).

The people who lived prior to the great flood were extremely wicked; their thoughts, attitudes, and behavior were all in opposition to God's way and his purpose for creating them (i.e., eternal life and sonship in the Family and Kingdom of God). Today's age is a repeat of Noah's day, and the Father and Jesus Christ are just as grief-stricken and disappointed because of the wickedness of people and their rejection of the opportunity that they have been offered:

"But as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be when the Son of man comes. For in the days before the flood, they were eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them away: so shall it be when the Son of Man comes" (Matt.24:37-39 Para.). See also Lk.17:28-30.

Jesus said that just prior to his return, people's attitudes and behavior would be exactly the same as they were during the days just prior to Noah being saved from God's wrath upon humanity. But what were these attitudes and behaviors of the people of Noah's day?

During Noah's day, belief in and obedience to the true God and his ways was almost non-existent (only Noah was righteous). People were going about their lives with no thought of the true God or the consequences of their lifestyles. When the flood came, some who had heard the preaching of Noah realized that what he had said was true, but it was too late for them to escape the wrath of God. Today, God offers escape to any who will repent and believe his good news message.

God is Persistent

God the Father and Jesus Christ are persistent and extremely patient in their desire to save humanity from eternal death:
"But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2.Pet.3:8-9 KJV).

Because of their desire for all to repent and reap the benefits of this change in the human heart, God the Father and Jesus Christ are going to give humanity one last opportunity to accept their offer of eternal life and sonship in the Family and Kingdom of God. But prior to this opportunity, humanity will suffer the wrath of God. He will punish them for their rebellion, eliminate all evil, and remove any physical and spiritual opposition to his government.

**When and What?**

When will the wrath of God come and what does God hope to accomplish by it?

The full wrath of God will come after the Father's good news message has been proclaimed to his chosen people just before the return of Jesus Christ. When this happens, the wrath of God will come upon all the scattered tribes of Israel, the Jews, and the rest of humanity. Because the vast majority of people and nations have shown that they do not want God's rule in their lives, God is going to kill all but a very few of them before and during the return of Jesus Christ.

After the full fury of the wrath of God has been poured out and the earth lies in ruin and its population is drastically reduced, the Kingdom of God will be established as an all-powerful, world-ruling government. This government will solve all of humanity's problems in a fair and equitable manner with true justice and liberty for all. It will not be a government ruled by selfishly motivated humans, but a government ruled by the righteous all-powerful family of God.

The Father and Jesus Christ have not forgotten their master plan for humanity. It is after the completion of God's wrath and during the rule of Jesus Christ that all humans will come to fully understand and appreciate the awesome grandeur of the opportunity that they have been offered: the opportunity to become a son of God the Father and enter his Family and Kingdom.

God the Father still hopes to increase his Family and Kingdom. The wrath of God upon this wicked and perverse generation is regrettable, but necessary in order for him to implement the next step in his grand and awesome plan for the salvation of humanity.

By B.L. Cocherell
CHAPTER
TWO
WHY PROPHECY?

Among other things, the Bible is a historical record of the past, present, and future of humanity. Depending on who is doing the calculating, the Bible is composed of either two thirds or one quarter prophecy. Regardless of the exact percentage of prophecy contained in the Bible, biblical prophecy is simply history written in advance of the actual event.

Humans are trapped in this dimension of time and space and can only know the present and the past because these are the limits of human existence. Although humans attempt to look beyond the present into the future, the natural constraints of this physical realm make it impossible for humans to know with certainty anything that is beyond the past and present of this dimension of time and space. However, God is not limited to the past or the present, because his realm is outside these physical constraints. God created this dimension of time and space and has sovereign authority and power over its present and future existence. Not only does God have the authority to dictate and predict this physical realm's future, God has the power to cause his predictions to come to pass.

THE BIBLE AND PROPHECY

The Sovereign God claims that what is recorded in the Bible by his servants and prophets are his words. Within this book God claims sovereignty over all things that exist and over all humans and their eternal destiny. The Bible is the only book on planet earth that can demonstrate that its inspiration is supernatural in origin and that it is from a being that exists outside this physical realm. One way it does this is by predicting with incredible accuracy personal and world events before they happen and then bringing these events to pass in every detail within a specified time frame. The fulfillment of prophecy is a major proof of God's existence and that he has sovereign authority and power over his creation.

Although the Bible is a witness to humanity that the Sovereign God and the Creator God exist, the Bible was written primarily for those whom God has called to salvation during this age. Through the Bible, it is possible to learn from the experience and teaching of others and gain valuable knowledge, understanding, and inspiration to help us in our daily walk with God:

"Every scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; so that the man of God may be perfect, fully furnished for every good work" (2.Tim.3:16-17). See also Eph.6:10-17; Heb.4:12.
"Now all these things happened to them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1.Cor.10:11 KJV). See also Psa.19:7; Pro.1:1-7; Dan.12:9-12; Col.1:7-10.

The apostle Paul says that the things that happened to the people of ancient Israel were recorded for those who would live in the end of the age; therefore it is important for God's servants today to understand the writings of the prophets concerning national Israel's past, present, and future as it impacts world events.

The apostles taught the elect of their age how to "be established in present truth" (See 2.Pet.1:2) in order to live a pious life and, in an understanding of prophecy. A part of this teaching involved prophecy as they understood it to apply to that age. The apostle Peter says the following about how we should view prophecy:

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me. Moreover I will endeavor that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2.Pet.1:10-16 KJV).

The apostles did not teach foolish things; they taught the things that they were taught by Jesus Christ. Jesus knew the truth about the beginning and end of humanity and the prophecies that must come to pass in order for his heavenly Father's plan for humanity to be completed because Jesus, as the Creator God, was the giver of all truth from the Father and he dictated the future of national Israel and humanity.

The Father said for us to pay attention to what his son said:

"Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matt 17:4-5 NIV). See also Mk.9:7; Lk.9:35.

It is important to carefully study what Christ said while he was on earth and what he caused to be written to us through his prophets when he was the Creator God before his birth as a human.
"And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning-star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the holy spirit" (2.Pet.1:19-21 NIV).

A WARNING

"But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping" (2.Pet.2:1-3 NIV).

Many people today claim to be the Sovereign God's prophets and because of their persuasiveness, it is sometimes difficult to know whether or not a person is a prophet of God or a false prophet. Today, there are many false prophets and teachers of damnable heresies and shameful things in opposition to God's truth. One way to tell if a person is a prophet sent from God is to see if their teaching reflects God's truth. If a prophet's teachings or behavior is in opposition to God's law, they are not sent from him.

Does it Matter?

Does it matter what you believe about prophecy and will these beliefs affect your salvation? The answers to both questions depend on your attitude and behavior toward God and the current state of world events.

For ancient Israel, it was very important for them to heed a prophet's warning to repent of their individual and national sins in order to receive the blessing that God had promised and not suffer punishment for continued rebellion. Today, it is just as important to heed a true prophet of God as it was for ancient Israel. And it does matter how a person views prophecy, because if a person incorrectly understands a prophecy and makes decisions predicated on misinformation, these decisions cannot only affect one's personal life, but can also adversely affect the lives of other people. History is full of examples of disastrous results from wrong decisions made by individuals and groups of people who based their actions on a misunderstanding of biblical prophecy.

PROPHECY CATEGORIES

In order to minimize confusion when studying prophetic events, it helps to place each prophecy in its proper category. The following is a list of the major prophecy categories:
• World events
• National Israel
• The House of Israel
• The House of Judah
• Individual tribes of national Israel
• Individual nations
• Punishment, destruction, repentance, and blessings
• Predictions specific to individuals and certain prophets in the end of the age
• Prophecy concerning the Father's elect
• The dangers that face the Father's elect
• The fate of the elect for failing to make correct decisions
• Punishment, protection, and rewards
• End of this Age (Punishment and Destruction of nations and people)
• The Kingdom of God (its coming and its rule)
• The Various Resurrections

World Events and God's Plan for the Salvation of Humanity

If one is to understand prophecies concerning world events in the political sense, one must understand them in the context of how each prophecy relates to national Israel, the House of Israel, the House of Judah, and God's past, present, and future purpose for their existence, because the tribes of Israel are at the focal point of God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

If one is to understand world events in the environmental sense (e.g., earthquakes, famine, disease, and earth changes) one must understand them in the context of how each prophecy relates to God's plan for the salvation of humanity and the necessity to teach historical lessons that show humanity's mortality and morality and its need for physical and spiritual salvation.

Prophecies that deal with national Israel, the Houses of Israel and Judah, and the individual tribes of Israel are separate categories. If you understand this, it makes many past, present, and future prophetic events much more clear. When studying prophecies concerning the end of the age, the House of Judah primarily refers to the Jewish nation of Israel comprised of the tribes of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin and the House of Israel refers to the people who are commonly called the lost ten tribes of Israel (Asher, Dan, Gad, Issachar, Joseph comprised of Ephraim and Manasseh, Naphthali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun).

There are also prophecies about the impact of individual tribes of Israel and other nations regarding world events as they interact with the various national entities that are comprised mainly of Israeliish people. Therefore, in order to understand prophecy concerning world events in a political sense, one must know the current names and locations of the ancient nations and people that are referred to in the Bible.
Prophecy Time Frames

There are three time frames for prophetic events: the past, the present, and the future:

The fulfillment of past prophetic events proves the existence of a supreme being who has the authority and power to influence people's lives and foreordain the course of events in this physical realm. The fulfillment of past prophetic events provides those who will study and meditate on them with insight into the mind of God and an opportunity to learn life lessons from the experience of other people.

Many present prophecies are ones which have spanned centuries, such as the blessings promised to the tribes of Israel, the curses for the Israelite's continual rebellion against God. The religious confusion among the tribes of Israel, and the negative effect these religions have had on the Israelitish peoples. The continuing fulfillment of these types of prophecies shows that obedience to God's law brings blessings, but disobedience causes negative results that pass to successive generations.

Future prophetic events are the ones that most interest people, such as the sequence of events which are to occur during the last 3 ½ years before Christ returns and the rapid emergence of the prophetic Beast and False Prophet just before the end of the age events begin to occur.

The fulfillment of past and present prophetic events is relatively easy to identify because they can be precisely located in the context of recorded history. But this is not the case with future prophetic events because these events are only revealed to those who need to know in advance of the event (See Dan.12:9-10).

Having a good overview of past and present prophecies can help a person understand why the fulfillment of these events were necessary. Having a good overview of present and future prophecies can help one put the current world conditions in perspective and understand that, no matter how difficult or disconcerting these events may be, they are all necessary for the completion of God's awesome plan for the salvation of humanity.

Problems in Understanding Prophecy

The following are the main problems most people have in truly understanding prophecy:

• Believing other people's interpretation instead of doing the research themselves
• Not being well versed in the basic plan of God for humanity
• Not knowing which prophecies are or are not relevant to one's daily life
• Not having access to credible historical reference materials
• Not realizing that certain prophecies are understood on a need to know basis
How to View the Study of Prophecy

Some people base their hope of physical and spiritual survival on their understanding of prophetic events; however, many have been disappointed and have suffered ridicule and hardships because of their belief in a false prophet's predictions or belief in a prophetic event that did not happen when they thought it should.

The study of prophecy must always be kept in perspective, or one can be easily led astray by false doctrine or false prophets (See Eph.4:14). A healthy scepticism about a person's interpretation of biblical prophecy will serve you well and perhaps prevent you from making a mistake that will have a negative impact on your life.

The prophet Daniel was told the following about the mysterious things that he was told to record about the future:

"And he said, Go your way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waits, and comes to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. But go you your way till the end be: for you shall rest, and stand in your lot at the end of the days" (Dan.12:9-13 KJV).

Daniel wanted to know exactly what the things he was told to record meant and when they would come to pass. However, he did not need to understand the details surrounding these events or the exact time of their fulfillment because they would not affect him or the people of his day.

Foolish Questions

Paul's warning to Titus concerning avoiding foolish questions and arguing about things in which there is no benefit also applies when it comes to studying and discussing prophecy, because many prophecies simply have no bearing on your physical or spiritual life or your salvation today:

"Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and arguments, and quarrels of the law, for they are unprofitable and vain. And that after the first and second warning, avoid the heretic, knowing that such a person has been perverted, and sins, being self-condemned" (Tit.3: 9-11 Para.).

It simply does not matter if a person understands some prophecies or not, because some prophecies will not impact your life one way or another, especially if these prophecies have already had their total fulfillment for past generations or their fulfillment is so far in the future that the event will not impact people alive today.
Paul's warning to Titus should be taken seriously by anyone who does not want to suffer the consequences of associating with the elect who are teaching heresy which can include a perverted interpretation of prophecy. Moreover, most prophecies are only understood in retrospect because only then is there enough information to compare an event with the prophecy about that event.

Although some understanding of prophetic events is important in order to have a balanced view of the Bible and God's plan for the salvation of humanity, you must understand that there are many more important aspects of being a member of God's earthly family than being extremely well versed in biblical prophecy. The apostle Paul said the following to the Corinthian church about the importance of understanding prophecy to one's walk with God:

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1.Cor.13:1-3 NIV).

Paul says that if you are not a loving individual you have gained nothing. Therefore, the understanding and the gaining of this godly character trait is more important than an exceptional understanding of prophecy. Although it is important, you should keep the study of prophecy in perspective, because there are many more important aspects of your walk with God than an understanding of prophecy. Moreover, if you neglect to do the more important things, it will not matter in the day of judgement whether or not you understood prophecy.

"Love is longsuffering, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunts not itself, is not puffed up. Does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; Rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; Bears all things, believeth all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1.Cor.13:4-7).

Without exercising the gift of love, all other gifts of the spirit will be of little value to the one having or exercising them. Although true love is sometimes unseen, its power can be dramatic and monumental in scope and effect. By understanding and exercising the spiritual attributes of love, faith, and works, a person can become increasingly stronger in the spirit until they reach spiritual maturity and perfection. See 2.Thes.2:9-10 Gal.5:9,22.

"Love never fails: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1.Cor.13:8-10).
During this age, those who are charged with teaching God's people can only partially predict future events because they do not know everything God knows, nor are they privy to every detail of God's plan for the end of the age events.

Can Prophecies Fail?

Paul said that there are prophecies that fail. But is this true? Can prophecies fail to come to pass? Yes, prophecies can fail.

The prophet Jonah reluctantly went to Nineveh and proclaimed that in 40 days the city and its inhabitants would be destroyed. To Jonah's dismay the people believed him and proclaimed a fast, even the king believed Jonah's prediction and humbled himself and decreed that both man and beast should fast, repent of their sins, and beseech God to forgive them and let them live.

On the fortieth day Jonah sat outside the city waiting for Nineveh's destruction, but no fire came down from heaven, no earthquake shook the city, and no army invaded it; nothing at all happened. Jonah had faithfully warned the people that in 40 days God would destroy the city, but the prophecy failed to come to pass on time.

Even though Jonah knew that God would show mercy to those who would repent, he still thought that God might destroy the city and its people, so he continued to wait to see what would happen. What happened is that Jonah received a lesson in God's mercy:

"When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened" (Jon.3:10 NIV).

The prophecy of destruction did not come to pass because the situation had changed. Although Nineveh was eventually destroyed about 150 years after Jonah's prophecy, it was not destroyed in the prophecies' original time frame.

In the Book of Jeremiah we see a conditional prophecy:

"Early in the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came from the Lord: "This is what the Lord says: Stand in the courtyard of the Lord's house and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the house of the Lord. Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word. Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done. Say to them, 'This is what the LORD says: If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you, and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth.'" (Jer.26:1-6 NIV).
Although these people knew that the Creator God was real and that he was not a God to be trifled with, they did not pay attention to the warning he gave through Jeremiah; instead, "The priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die!" (Jer:26:8).

True to their nature, these Jews were not about to change their ways. This proclivity for dismissing prophetic warnings reaches into the future to the time of the Two Witnesses who are prophets of God and who will proclaim the true gospel message and the Messiah's return, and make many predictions concerning world events for 3½ years preceding Christ's return. These two prophets will be dismissed as troublemakers and despised by the Jews and the rest of the tribal nations of Israel before they are murdered and put on public display in the streets of Jerusalem. See Rev.11:1-12.

"Then Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people: "The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard. Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the Lord your God. Then the Lord will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you" (Jer.26:12-13 NIV).

It is important when studying prophecy to understand that some prophecies will fail because circumstances change. God can change his mind according to a change in circumstances or people's attitudes and behavior.

**Jesus' Disciples**

Jesus' disciples were very anxious to understand the things that might happen in the end of the age because they were looking for him to reestablish the Kingdom of Israel in their immediate future. When they asked Jesus about these events, he only gave them an overview of prophecy, because these events were not going to take place during their lifetime. See Matt.24 and Mk.13.

The prophecies that Jesus gave his disciples about the end of the age were useless to them in a practical sense, because these prophecies would not come to pass for centuries and would only impact the lives of those who would be alive during the end of the age. However, for those who live during the events just prior to Christ's return, a good understanding of these prophecies can be beneficial.

**The Apostles**

It is evident from the tone of many of the apostles' letters that, for many years, they expected Christ to return during their lifetime. The apostle Paul says the following about the timing of the elect's change to immortal life:

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1.Cor.15:51-52 KJV).
Many of the early church believed that Paul meant that their transformation to a spirit-being would happen during their lifetime. The elect of the early church did sleep; they all died. Paul’s prediction did not come true for them at that time; however, Paul’s prediction will come true, and perhaps during our lifetime.

Very few of the prophetic writings were relevant to the lives of elect during the time of the early church. In reality, unless there is some potential physical or spiritual benefit to an individual, there is little value to understanding every detail of future world events. However, having an overview of God’s promises regarding the establishment of his kingdom can greatly increase your faith.

The Church Disappears

Except for the prophecies warning of the destruction of the early church, practically none of the prophetic writings about future world events have come to pass (as of this writing, 2014), or have had a dramatic personal impact on the lives of the Father’s elect since the ministry of Jesus Christ. The prophecies concerning the disappearance of the early church were prophecies that should have been taken seriously by its members, because these predications would not only have a dramatic impact on their lives but also impact the lives of the elect through the ensuing centuries.

Matthew, Mark, and John all record Jesus quoting the prophecy in Zechariah (Zech.13:7) which foretold the scattering of Jesus’ disciples after his death:

"All you shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered abroad" (Matt.26:31 KJV). See also Mk.14:27; Jn.16:32.

This is an extremely important prophecy because the following words which Jesus did not quote from Zechariah’s prophecy give us the key to understanding why the apostolic church ceased to exist as a powerful entity:

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones" (Zech.13:7 KJV).

The little ones mentioned here are the Father’s elect, as noted in many scriptures (see Matt.8:12; 18:3-10; 19:13-14; Mk.9:42). Why would Jesus Christ turn against the little ones? And why did he omit this part of Zechariah’s prophecy? The reasons that Jesus would turn against the little ones is because they would turn against the Faith Once Delivered and cease to be zealous for truth and because this was a different prophecy which would be fulfilled at a different time.
The prophecy in Zechariah would begin its fulfillment during the apostolic age of the church and continue until a time shortly before Christ's return.

If the early church had truly understood and taken seriously Zechariah's prophecy and the many warnings given to them in the apostle's letters, perhaps the outcome would have been different. Perhaps the early church as an organization would have had a longer history of accomplishment and many of God's people would not have been destroyed.

**PROPHECY FOR TODAY**

There is a category of predictions that pertain to this age of salvation and its particular dangers. The following prophecies concern the Sovereign Father's elect family on earth and seem to have a time frame in which there is an ongoing fulfillment that began with the early church and ends with the return of Christ:

**Wolves Among the Flock**

"And from Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. . .Take heed, therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the holy spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his blood. For I know that after I leave, grievous wolves will come among you, that will not spare the flock. Also among you shall men arise, speaking perverse things, in order to draw away disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:17, 28-30 Para.).

This prophecy certainly came to pass during the time of the early church and has continued to this day. This is a prophetic warning that should be taken very seriously by anyone who is concerned about their salvation.

**The Latter Days**

The apostle Paul warned the evangelist Timothy to beware of those who would depart from the faith and remain among the elect to draw them away from God's truth:

"Now the spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times saying that some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; telling hypocritical lies; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1.Tim.4:1-2 Para.).

Paul's prediction that evil people would attempt to destroy God's people from within was applicable to the early church and should be taken very seriously today, because it specifically speaks to the end of the age just before Christ returns.
Satanic Deception and His Ministry

Satan's deception through false ministers causes much disunity and division among the various congregations of God. At the very beginning of the early church, Satan began his plan to destroy the elect of God from within. The apostle Paul warned the elect at Corinth to be aware of this threat to their eternal lives:

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2.Cor.11:13-15 KJV). See also Deut.13:1-5; Jer.23:21-22.

Yes, Satan has many ministers disguised as true ministers of God (Rev.2:9; 3:9). Although these servants of Satan are actively deceiving the world at large, some of these individuals are within the congregations of God and are actively subverting the elect of God.

The history of the church clearly shows that Satan and his servants have been very successful in their mission to destroy the elect, including those who are dedicated to restoring the Faith Once Delivered.

False Prophets

The Bible contains many warnings about avoiding false prophets. The Book of Revelation speaks of a great False Prophet that will come on the world scene at the end of this age and deceive most of the world into worshiping a false god who is identified in the Book of Revelation as the Beast.

Will the False Prophet and the Beast openly reveal who and what they are and their true intentions? Of course not! The only way a person will be able to recognize these individuals for what they truly are is to understand the prophecies concerning them. This is why the elect need to clearly understand the details of God's plan for the salvation of humanity, the foundational teachings of the Bible, and what God expects of those he calls to salvation during this age; otherwise, one will be among those deceived by false prophets and other evil individuals.

There are many prophets in the world today with many contradictory opinions about biblical prophecy and the future of humanity. The reality is that there are only two religions in this world: the Sovereign God's worship system and a counterfeit worship system having many differing sects but all in opposition to the Sovereign God's worship system. The Sovereign God has prophets that promote his worship system and evil spirits have prophets who promote a counterfeit of the true God's worship system.
The problem has never been a lack of prophets, it has always been determining if a prophet is serving the Sovereign God and speaking the truth or if that prophet is a false prophet serving himself for personal gain or serving Satan who is actively deceiving the world. See Rev.2:9;12:9.

A Place of Safety

Many people spend an inordinate amount of time and effort preparing themselves a safe haven in the event the prophecies concerning the Beast system and the Great False Prophet come to pass during their lifetime, while others seek to locate the place of safety noted in many prophecies and contemplate what they will do when they arrive at this place.

The reality is that, according to the prophecies in the Book of Revelation, a minimum of six-sevenths of the Father's elect will not be protected during the 3½ years of trouble at the end of the age because of their rebellion against him. So what benefit is it to make elaborate physical preparation for one's safety or know the location of the place of safety when it is obvious from the prophecies that the only elect who will be protected are the ones who have spent their time and effort to grow in grace and knowledge and live a life of obedience and service to the Father. Wouldn't it be more prudent to spend your time on these efforts?

Warnings about the End of the Age

The biblical record shows us that ancient Israel rarely paid attention to the prophets or took seriously God's warnings that he would punish them if they did not repent. The Israelites were in a habit of ridiculing, physically abusing, and killing God's prophets because they did not like the message that they brought. This proclivity of the Israelites to dismiss God's true prophets is a trait that today's modern Israelites who are scattered throughout the world continue to exhibit. This trait will result in their collective and individual punishment just before Christ returns.

If we are truly living in the end of the age just before Christ returns, there are a number of prophecies which are very important to certain individuals and of general interest to others.

The Proclamation of The Gospel

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt.24:14 KJV).

Jesus said that his Father's good news message must be proclaimed as a witness to all the nations before the end will come. The question is, Has the gospel truly been preached to all nations? The early church did not do this and during this age most professing Christian ministers are preaching a different gospel than Jesus and the apostles preached. Therefore, it seems that, in order to understand this prophecy, one must first understand what the true good news message is before one can know if it has been preached to all the world.
The proclaiming of the good news message to all nations in the context of the end of the age will either require an enormous amount of money, an enormous amount of supernatural power, or both and will require men of tremendous ability, courage, character, and faith to accomplish the task.

The Two Witnesses

"And I will give to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two lamp-stands [candlesticks] before the God of the earth [See Zech.3:1-10]. And if anyone desires to harm them, fire comes out of their mouth and devours their enemies: and if any one desires to harm them, so it is right for him to be killed. These have the authority to shut up the heaven, that no rain may rain in the days of their prophecy [3½ years]: and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire" (Rev.11:3-6 Para.).

The prophecies concerning these two men show that one of them is the signet of God on earth and has authority over all nations. These two hold the highest office of authority within the Father's earthly family of kings and priests. These two men not only predict earth-shaking events, but also have the authority and supernatural power to bring them to pass.

God the Father sent Jesus Christ to the earth to proclaim his good news message. Jesus' message can be paraphrased: "Here is my Father's good news, believe it, because if you do not believe it, this is what will happen to you."

The two great prophets at the end of the age will have the same message, plus they will be warning people to prepare for the impending arrival of the Messiah to conquer the earth and establish the Kingdom of God in Jerusalem.

When we review what the prophets of old said and did, we notice that the essence of their messages and predictions is that if sinners do not repent of their rebellion against God they will be punished. What are the Two Witnesses going to predict? If they follow the rule of prophets, they will predict the punishment of sinners and benefits for those who repent of their sins.

How will you recognize the Two Witnesses mentioned in the Book of Revelation? You will be able to recognize them if you have the spirit of God dwelling in you, understand the gospel message, and understand the prophecies concerning them. Everyone else will think of them as enemies of their particular god or way of life.
Mark of the Beast

"And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that have understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six" (Rev.13:16-18 KJV).

"And the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name" (Rev.14:11 KJV).

"And the first [the spirit-being] went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshiped his image" (Rev.16:2 KJV).

These predictions are really bad news for people who accept the mark of the Beast. Today, in the professing Christian community there are many conflicting opinions as to exactly what the mark of the beast is and is not. Because this is a life or death issue, anyone who wants to avoid taking this mark and escape the punishment that comes with the mark must understand the prophecies that explain exactly what this mark is and is not. See Chapter 16 for more details regarding the mark of the beast.

Flee Jerusalem

"And when you shall see Jerusalem being encircled by armies, then know that its destruction is near. Let those in Judea flee to the mountains; and those in the midst of it, let them go out. And those who are out of town do not go into Jerusalem. For these are the days of vengeance when all things that have been written are to be fulfilled. But woe to the pregnant women, and those breast-feeding children in those days! for great distress will be on the earth and wrath on his people" (Lk.21:20-23 Para.).

It is recorded that on the twenty first of Jyar in 66 A.D., just before sunset, chariots and soldiers in armor were seen running about in the clouds around the city of Jerusalem (See Josephus Wars IV, 5,3; Lk.21:20) About 3½ years later in 70 A.D. Herod's temple and Jerusalem were destroyed. There has already been one fulfilment of this prophecy and according to the sequence of events concerning the end of the age, it seems that there will be a second fulfillment. Therefore, if you are one of God's people living in Jerusalem it would be advantageous to understand the details concerning this prophecy's fulfilment during this age so that you will be prepared to take the appropriate action when you see this event come to pass.
If you are living in some other country, it would still be good to understand this prophecy, because you would know that the return of the Messiah is less that four years away. For you this prophecy would only be important as information that can help strengthen your faith as you begin to see other prophetic events concerning the end of the age unfold.

SUMMARY

Prophecy is very interesting to most people because it is in our nature to be inquisitive and seek to understand the future. For some people the desire to understand prophecy becomes an obsession that dominates their thoughts and biblical studies. Although prophecy is a major part of the biblical record, understanding prophecy is not the most important aspect of the biblical record concerning your salvation.

The apostle Paul says the following to the Thessalonians about Christ's return:

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that, that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (1.Thes. 5:1-8 KJV).

The elect at Thessalonica understood their heavenly Father's basic plan for the salvation of humanity and knew that Christ would come when people least expected; therefore, Paul's instruction to pay attention to the events of their time included the warning to keep this knowledge in perspective and not lose sight of the goal, which is salvation.

Blessings Come From Watching

"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he comes shall find watching. He will have them sit down and eat as he serves them" (Lk.12:37 Para.).

Active watching involves responsiveness, faithfulness, and effort. Why is a Christian blessed for watching? The reason is that if you actively watch (i.e., attend to the business of growing spiritually) you will be blessed with all of the things that are promised to those who participate in the first resurrection. Verse 37 is also a clear reference to the righteous being given rewards in the Family of God by Jesus Christ after the first resurrection and the wedding supper of the Lamb.
"If he [Jesus Christ] comes in the second watch or the third watch [delays his coming] and still finds them watching, blessed are those servants" (Lk.12:38 Para.).

Who is watching? The Philadelphia grouping of God's people appear to be the only ones who have been consistently and faithfully watching. When the rewards of the Philadelphia grouping are examined, one can easily see how blessed these particular servants will be at the return of Christ. See Rev.3:12.

In a broader sense, this blessing also applies to the wise Christians (e.g., the five wise virgins. See Matt:25:1-13) who are among the other six groupings of elect described in Revelation 2 and 3 who receive severe correction from Christ. Even though Christ's return appears to be delayed to the second or third watch, he does come and he finds the wise watching, because they have heeded the midnight warning cry (Matt. 25:6). Because the wise were actively watching and had a reserve of oil to keep their lamps burning, they are also blessed. When the rewards of those who heed the warnings to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are reviewed, we see that they are also given substantial rewards along with eternal and immortal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.

Be Ready

"Be therefore, ready, for the Son of man [Jesus Christ] comes in an hour when you are not expecting him" (Lk.12:40 Para.). See also Mk.13:30-37; Rev.3:1-3.

You must be consistent in your faithfulness and dedication to the Father and Jesus Christ, because none of us knows the hour when Jesus Christ will come. And we are each but a breath away from death. And when we die, our fate is sealed. If we have been faithful to the very end of our life, we will be in the first resurrection and will be rewarded accordingly. However, if we have been unfaithful in our walk with God, we will be punished for our wickedness in the Lake of Fire, which is the second death.

The point is that it is necessary for anyone who is called to salvation to be ready, consistent, and faithful at all times. Remember, it is the person who overcomes to the end that is saved. Whenever that end comes for us, whether we die tomorrow, are martyred for our belief in the Father and his Son, or live until the return of Jesus Christ, it is the consistent overcomer who secures eternal and immortal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.
Academic Exercise

Although prophecy is important from an overall point of proving that the Sovereign God exists and that his plan for the salvation of humanity is on schedule, a keen understanding of prophecy is not required for one to obtain salvation. For most people, the study of prophecy concerning world events is an academic exercise, because it is rare that an individual can impact the end result of biblical prophecies. In reality, prophecies concerning world events will come to pass whether or not one understands them or whether or not one believes them.

However, there are certain prophecies that should be understood because they relate to one's eternal salvation now and in the future. Many of these prophecies contain predictions about punishment, protection, and rewards for the elect and what action to take to avoid punishment and gain protection and rewards for doing what the Sovereign Father expects of someone he has called to salvation.

The apostle Paul said,

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished to all good works" (2.Tim.3:16-17).

Understanding the past, present, and future prophecies is of no value unless this understanding will have a positive impact on your life now and in the future. Therefore, it is important to keep the study of prophecy in perspective and pay special attention to teachings and prophecies that are important to your salvation. You must be especially careful about what you come to believe concerning prophecy. You must challenge the predictions of today's prophets with the word of God, making sure that what is predicted is not truth mixed with error and that what is predicted conforms to God's word and his plan for the salvation of humanity.

Keep Prophecy in Perspective

Although one must not minimize the importance of prophecy because it is a part of the whole process of growing in grace and knowledge, prophecy must be viewed as it relates to the Father's overall goal for each person individually, as well as for humanity as a whole. Keeping the study of prophecy in the proper perspective will help you acquire those good things that Paul talked about to Timothy. We can become perfect in understanding and in righteousness by understanding prophecy in a correct light.

Prove all things

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1.Thes.5:21 KJV).

By B.L. Cocherell
Nearly 150 years before Cyrus was born, the prophet Isaiah foretold his birth, his name, and the tasks God had predetermined for him to accomplish. The Bible records that certain people are foreordained to be born and carry out specific tasks for God during their lifetime and a few of these individuals are even named before their birth. Cyrus the Great was one of these individuals predestined to play a pivotal role in the Sovereign God's awesome plan for humanity.

King Cyrus was an extremely important person, because God destroyed the Babylonian empire through him, and brought a close to a seventy-year punishment of the Jews that God imposed on them for their rebellion against him. Also through King Cyrus, God set into motion his seventy-week prophecy that fixed the year of the Messiah's death and resurrection, reveals the sequence of events for the Messiah's return which will bring to an end human rule of the earth, and usher in the government of God to rule the entire earth.

Although historians have slightly differing interpretations and views of the historical record concerning the dates of Cyrus' birth, death, and his various accomplishments, there is ample historical documentation that Cyrus the Great was indeed a real person whose name is mentioned over 22 times in the Bible and whose tomb in Iran can be visited today.

**Cyrus' Protection**

In Volume 1 of his historical works, the Greek historian Herodotus records that, before Cyrus birth, King Astyages dreamed that out of his daughter Mandane flowed a stream of water which filled his capital and flooded all of Asia. When he asked the interpreters of dreams what this meant, they told him his pregnant daughter would have a son who would overthrow his rule.

In order to stop this perceived threat to his rule, King Astyages sent for his trusted servant Harpagus and told him to kill and bury his daughter's child as soon as it was born; however, Harpagus could not bring himself to kill the newborn child and instead gave him to a shepherd and his wife to kill. But, they were also unwilling to kill the child and instead reared Cyrus as their own.

Harpagus' reluctance to kill the infant Cyrus and the emotional attachment to the newborn child by the married couple shows the Creator God's hand at work to fulfill his plan for Cyrus. See Isa.45:10-13.
The Bible is full of accounts of individuals in whom God had a special interest being protected and guided through their life; this was the case with Cyrus. God had foreordained this man to be his anointed servant (Isa.45:1) and protected him and guided the events of his life in order for him to fulfill his destiny.

Cyrus the Man

Cyrus was the grandson of Astyages, King of the Medes. He was born in the province of Persis, in southwest Iran in 590 B.C. and died in battle in 530 B.C. He founded the Archaemenian dynasty and the Persian Empire. He overthrew three great empires: the Medes, Lydians, and Babylonians. He also united most of the ancient Middle East into a single state stretching from India to the Mediterranean Sea, which meant that he possessed the largest empire in the world at that time.

Cyrus was a leader of tremendous military ability and high moral and ethical values; he was not inclined to extreme brutality, cruelty, and the perpetual conquest for new territories as were many other conquerors. Cyrus was also extremely tolerant of the customs and the religions of the nations he conquered.

The Greeks considered the Persian Empire to be the greatest threat to their own independence, but they highly regarded Cyrus because of his character and ethical rule.

The Cyrus Cylinder

One important source for the history of Cyrus is the so-called Cyrus cylinder discovered in 1879 by Hormonz Rassam during excavations at Babylon. Although the cylinder is not totally intact and there is some controversy concerning the exact translation of the cuneiform script, it is clear that this ancient document substantiates the biblical record about the destruction of the Babylonian empire and the Jews' return to Palestine from their Babylonian captivity.

The following is a partial translation of cuneiform script on the Cyrus cylinder which is dated 538-529 B.C. and housed in the British Museum:

"I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of the land of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters, son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, great king, king of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, great king, king of Anshan, progeny of an unending royal line, whose rule Bel and Nabu cherish, whose kingship they desire for their hearts' pleasures.'

"When I, well-disposed, entered Babylon, I established the seat of government in the royal palace amidst jubilation and rejoicing. Marduk, the great God, caused the big-hearted inhabitants of Babylon to love me. I sought daily to worship him. My numerous troops moved about undisturbed in the midst of Babylon."
"I did not allow any to terrorize the land of Sumer and Akkad. I kept in view the needs of Babylon and all its sanctuaries to promote their well being. The citizens of Babylon...I lifted their unbecoming yoke. Their dilapidated dwellings I restored. I put an end to their misfortunes.'

"At my deeds Marduk, the great Lord, rejoiced, and to me, Cyrus, the king who worshiped, and to Cambyses, my son, the offspring of my loins, and to all my troops, he graciously gave his blessing, and in good spirit is before him we glorified exceedingly his high divinity.'

"All the kings who sat in the throne rooms, throughout the four quarters, from the Upper to the Lower Sea, those who dwell in...all the kings of the West Country who dwelt in tents, brought me their heavy tribute and kissed my feet in Babylon. From...to the cities of Ashur and Susa, Agade, Eshnuna, the cities of Zamban, Meurnu, Der, as far as the region of the land of Gutium, the holy cities beyond the Tigris whose sanctuaries had been in ruins over a long period, the Gods whose abode is in the midst of them. I returned to the places and housed them in lasting abodes.'

"I gathered together all their inhabitants and restored to them their dwellings. The Gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus had, to the anger of the Lord of the Gods, brought into Babylon, I at the bidding of Marduk, the great Lord made to dwell in peace in their habitations, delightful abodes.'

"May all the gods whom I have placed within their sanctuaries address a daily prayer in my favor before Bel and Nabu, that my days may be long."

The above text shows that King Cyrus did indeed allow many of the nations he conquered to not only practice their various religions. Moreover, he rebuilt their temples, restored their articles of worship, and allowed several ethnic groups (including the Jews) who were captive in Babylon to return to their homeland.

**Cyrus Invades Babylon**

The following excerpt from the cylinder text tells about the ease with which Cyrus' army entered the city of Babylon. This also substantiates the events in the Book of Daniel and a prophecy recorded by Isaiah:

"His widespread troops-their number, like that of the water of a river, which could not be counted, strolled along, their weapons packed away. Without any battle, he made him enter his city Babylon, sparing Babylon any damage. He delivered into my hands Nabonidus, the king who did not worship him."
The Book of Daniel only reveals that the same night in which the king of Babylon was having a great feast, the city was invaded and the king was killed. The biblical account seems to support the text on the Cyrus cylinder; in that, the invasion of Babylon was swift and that there was little or no resistance from its defenders.

In Volume 1 of his historical works, The Greek historian Herodotus records the following about the invasion of Babylon by King Cyrus:

"On the top, along the edges of the wall, they constructed buildings of a single chamber facing one to another, leaving between them room for a four-horse chariot to turn. In the circuit of the wall are a hundred gates, all of brass, with bronze lintels and side-posts...The city is divided into two portions by the river which runs through the midst of it. This river is the Euphrates, a broad, deep, swift stream, which rises in Armenia, and empties itself into the Erythraean sea.'

"At the rivers end of these cross streets are low gates in the fence that skirts the stream, which are, like the great gates in the outer wall, all of brass, and open towards the water...Cyrus on his way to Babylon came to the banks of the Gyndes, a stream which, rising in the Matienian mountains, runs through the country of the Dardanians, and empties itself into the river Tigris. The Tigris, after receiving the Gyndes, flows on by the city of Opis, and discharges its waters into the Erythraean sea.'

"When Cyrus reached this stream, which could only be passed in boats, one of the sacred white horses accompanying his march, full of spirit and high mettle, walked into the water, and tried to cross by himself; but the current seized him, swept him along with it, and drowned him in its depths. Cyrus, became enraged at the river, and threatened to break its strength so that in the future even women should cross it easily without wetting their knees.'

"Accordingly he put off for a time his attack on Babylon, and, dividing his army into two parts, he marked out by ropes one hundred and eighty trenches on each side of the Gyndes, leading off from it in all directions, and making his army dig, some on one side of the river, some on the other, he accomplished his threat by the aid of a great a number of hands, but not without losing the whole summer season. Having defeated the river Gyndes by dispersing it through three hundred and sixty channels, Cyrus, with Spring approaching, marched forward against Babylon. The Babylonians, encamped without their walls, awaited his coming.'

"A battle was fought at a short distance from the city, in which the Babylonians were defeated by the Persian king, whereupon they withdrew within their defenses. Here they shut themselves and made fun of his siege, having laid in a store of provisions for many years in preparation against this attack; for when they saw Cyrus conquering nation after nation, they were convinced that he would never stop, and that their turn would come at last. Now Cyrus did
not know how to proceed, for as time went on he made no progress in conquering the city.'

"In his distress either someone made a suggestion to him, or he himself came up with a plan, which he proceeded to follow. He placed a portion of his army at the point where the river enters the city, and another body at the back of the place where it comes out, with orders to march into the town by the bed of the stream, as soon as the water became shallow enough: he and his army then withdrew, and went to the place where Nitocris dug the basin for the river, where he did exactly what he had done in the past: he turned the Euphrates by a canal into the basin, which was then a marsh, on which the river sank to such a low level that the natural bed of the stream became crossable.'

"Hereupon the Persians who had been left at Babylon by the river-side, entered the stream, which had now sunk so as to reach about midway up to a man's thigh, and entered into the city.'

"Had the Babylonians been aware of what Cyrus was up to, or had they noticed their danger, they would have never allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them; for they would have closed all the street-gates which opened to the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would have caught the enemy, as it were, in a trap. But, as it was, the Persians came upon them by surprise and took the city.'

"Owing to the great size of the place, the inhabitants of the central part of Babylon, long after the outer portions of the town were taken, knew nothing of what had taken place, for they were engaged in a festival of dancing and reveling. Such, then, were the circumstances of the first taking of Babylon." See Daniel, chapter 5.

Nearly 150 years before Cyrus' birth, God declared through the prophet Isaiah that a man named Cyrus would be the anointed shepherd of his people and rebuild Jerusalem. At the time of the prophecy of Isaiah, Jerusalem was a prosperous city that would not be destroyed for more than 100 years by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar.

Isaiah 44:24, 26-28

"This the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, who makes all things, stretching out the heavens; I alone spread out the earth . . . He confirms the word of his servant and completes the counsel of his messengers. He says to Jerusalem, You will be peopled; and to the cities of Judah, you shall be built; and I will raise up its ruins" (vs.24, 26 Para.).

In verse 24, God reminds national Israel that he is the Creator of all things and their Redeemer. In verse 26 he says that he has the power to carry out the things that are said by his servants and messengers and promises to repopulate Jerusalem and rebuild the cities of Judah.
"He says to the deep, be a waste! And I will dry up your rivers! He says, To Cyrus my shepherd; he will fulfil all my will, even to say to Jerusalem, you shall be built; and to the temple, you shall be set up" (vs.27-28 Para.).

Some feel that the reference to the deep and the drying up of the rivers in verse 27 refers to the method by which the Euphrates river was diverted in order for Cyrus' army to enter the city of Babylon. Although this seems like a plausible explanation given the historical account of the invasion of the city, there may be other interpretations which are beyond the scope of this study. However, verse 27 is very clear; God names Cyrus as the man who will shepherd his people and carry out his plan to return the Jews to their homeland and rebuild the city and the temple.

Isaiah 45:1-13

"This says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whom I have seized by the right, to subdue nations before him. Yes, I will open the loins of kings, to open the two-leaved doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut. I will go before you and make hills level; I will tear apart the bronze doors and cut the iron bars in two. And I will give you the treasures of darkness, even treasures in secret places, that you may know that I am the Lord who calls you by your name, I the God of Israel" (vs.1-3 Para.).

In verses 1-3, we see that Cyrus is called the Lord's anointed (Heb. mashiyach), which denotes a person specifically chosen and set apart for a specific task. Notice also that God promised to intervene and help Cyrus conquer many nations (i.e., make hills level).

The opening of the two-leaved doors, the tearing apart of the bronze doors, and the cutting of the iron bars seem to picture God's intervention to open the hundred copper-alloy gates of Babylon to King Cyrus and his army.

Imagine Cyrus' amazement and sober contemplation as he became aware of Isaiah's prophecy and realized that almost 150 years before his birth he had been named and ordained by the God of the Israelites to become a mighty conquering king and perform a task for this God whom he neither knew nor worshiped.

Today, we view Isaiah's prophecy in the dim light of ancient history, which makes it difficult to fully comprehend Cyrus' perspective on the prophecy. Cyrus viewed the prophecy from the perspective of his many victorious battles and how easily he had conquered many nations, including the mighty Babylonian empire and its capital city.
"For Jacob my servant's sake, and for Israel my elect, I have called you by your name. I named you but you do not know me. I am God, and there is no other, there is no God except me, I will clothe you, even though you do not know me, that they may know from sunrise to sunset that there is none except me; I am God and there is no other who creates light and forms darkness; makes peace and creates evil. I God do all these things" (vs.4-7 Para.).

The Creator God states in verse 6 that one of the reasons for this prophecy is so that people will have a continual witness that he is God. This prophecy about Cyrus and its fulfilment is a continual witness of the Creator God's power and authority. See Jn.1:1-3; Eph.3:8-9; Heb.2:10.

"Woe to him that fights with his Maker! A potsherds among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What are you making? Or does the work say, He has no hands? Woe to him that says to his father, What are you fathering? Or to the woman, What are you laboring over? This says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker. Do you ask me the things to come? Do you give me commands about my sons, and about the works of my hands? I have made the earth, and created man on it. I stretched out the heavens with my hands; and I have set all of them in order" (vs.9-12 Para.).

Verses 9-12 seems to be a warning to King Cyrus to carefully consider and respect the awesome power of the God who claims to have the ultimate power to create, destroy, and recorded the words concerning him and what he was to accomplish almost 150 years before his birth.

"I have raised him [Cyrus] up to be ethical and have made all his ways direct. He shall build my city [Jerusalem], and he will release my captives; not for price, nor reward, says the Lord of hosts" (v.13 Para.).

Here, we see the task that Cyrus was brought into existence to accomplish for the Creator God of Israel. History records that Cyrus did accomplish the task for which he was foreordained.

Cyrus' Proclamation

In 2.Chronicles, chapter 36 and in Ezra chapter 1, we are told that King Cyrus was motivated by God to write a decree to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple:

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to accomplish the word of the Lord spoken through the mouth of Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king the of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, This says Cyrus king of Persia, The God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and has charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up" (2.Chrone. 36:22-23 Para.).
"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, This says Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he has charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra.1:1-3 KJV).

We are not told how King Cyrus became aware of Isaiah's prophecy concerning his life; however, it is entirely possible that Cyrus was told about the prophecy by Daniel who eventually held one of the Persian Empires' highest offices as chief of the three presidents over Persia (Dan.6:1-3). He may have been told by Ezra the priest or by Nehemiah who was another high ranking Jew in the Persian government (Neh.2:2; 8:9; 10:1). Another possibility is that Cyrus could have discovered the prophecy himself as he studied the religions of his captives. However he came to understand Isaiah's prophecy, he understood that he was the one named in it and that he had been chosen before his birth to perform a service to the God of the Jews who claimed to be the Creator of mankind and all that exists in the physical realm.

Jeremiah's Prophecy

Second Chronicles, chapter 36 and Ezra chapter 1 reveal that the Creator God made King Cyrus aware of the prophecy in Isaiah and motivated him to allow the Jews to return to their homeland in order for the prophetic words he had spoken through Jeremiah's to be fulfilled.

The prophet Jeremiah primarily records the progression of world events throughout history and their culmination in the return of the Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The holy scriptures reveal that, within the Sovereign Father's plan for humanity, there is a specific time frame within which this plan will be completed and that there are specific times when certain events within this plan must occur. It seems that the only prophecy recorded by Jeremiah which speaks to Babylonian captivity for the House of Judah and their repatriation to their homeland from this captivity is in Jeremiah, chapters 25 and 29.

Jeremiah 25:8-13 KJV

"Therefore this says the Lord of hosts; Because you have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, says the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations" (vs.8-9).
Because of their persistent rebellion against him and their refusal to repent of their sins, the Creator said he would cause the House of Judah to go into Babylonian captivity.

"Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (vs.10-11). See also Jer.29:1-10.

Verse 11 tells us that the land shall be a desolation and that the House of Judah will be in captivity 70 years. But, why 70 years of punishment? One of the reasons for this captivity was the refusal of the Jews to obey God's laws. One of these laws concerns allowing the land to rest every 7 years (i.e., the land Sabbath):

"But in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest to the land, a Sabbath for the Lord: you shall neither sow your field, nor prune your vineyard. That which grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, neither gather the grapes of your vineyard undressed: for it is a year of rest to the land" (Lev.25:4-5 KJV).

"But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, if, instead, you reject my statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all my commandments, and so break my covenant, I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that shall waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you shall sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies shall eat it up. 'And I will set my face against you so that you shall be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when no one is pursuing you. 'If also after these things, you do not obey me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. . . 'If then, you act with hostility against me and are unwilling to obey me, I will increase the plague on you seven times according to your sins" (Lev 26:14-18, 21 NAS).

"I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it" (Lev.26:33-35 KJV).

What is revealed about the 70 years of punishment in 2.Chronicles may indicate that the Jews were breaking the law of the land rest:

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"And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years [70 years]" (2.Chron.36:20-21 KJV).

While the majority of the population of the House of Judah were in Babylonian captivity, the land rested because there were very few people left in Palestine to work the land.

"And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, says the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations" (Jer. 25:12-13).

Although Jeremiah foretells the end of the Jews' captivity after 70 years, he says nothing about when the Jews will be sent back to their homeland.

**Daniel, Haggai, and Zechariah**

The prophets Daniel, Haggai, and Zechariah were all captives of the Babylonian and Persian empires and all three were given various insights by God into the reasons for Cyrus' proclamation concerning the Jews and each recorded certain understandings about the seventy-year prophecy. Daniel was given insight in the first year of King Darius' reign and Haggai and Zechariah were given insight in the second year of his reign. See Hag.1:1-15; Zech 1:1-16.

**Daniel Given Understanding**

"In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans: In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years [the 70 years of captivity and land rest] in the desolations of Jerusalem" (Dan.9:1-2 KJV).

Not only did God reveal details concerning the seventy-year captivity of the Jews in Babylon recorded by the prophet Jeremiah, he also revealed the date of the Messiah's death, resurrection, and return to establish the government of God on earth through a seventy-week prophecy:
"And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give you skill and understanding. . . Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy" (Dan.9:22, 24 KJV).

Daniel is told that this mysterious seventy-week prophecy begins with a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem:

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan.9:25-27 KJV).

The plan of God for the salvation of humanity was laid out before the world began. Within this plan are events and dates on which these events must occur in a specific sequence in order for the plan to be completed within its allotted time. Therefore, the timing of the prophecy concerning Cyrus was critical in order for the seventy-week prophecy, which was revealed to Daniel, to begin and end exactly on schedule.

The first part of the seventy-week prophecy, which began with a decree to restore Jerusalem and rebuild the temple, was completed with the death and resurrection of the Messiah in 30 A.D.; only the second part remains to be fulfilled at the end of this age. See chapter 15 for details concerning the seventy-week prophecy.

The Jews Return to Palestine

After the initial proclamation by King Cyrus to allow the Jews to return to Palestine, it took many years and the departure of four large groups of Jews from the land of their captivity for them to accomplish the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple.

The first group was lead by Sheshbazzar, a descendant of the Davidic line, with whom came a group of heads of families who settled in the ruins of the city and began to rebuild it.

The second group was lead by Zerubbabel who was the appointed governor of Jerusalem and Joshua, a son of Josedech the high priest.
The third group was lead by Ezra who was authorized to appoint judges in the Land of Israel and apply the laws of the Torah.

The fourth group was lead by Nehemiah in 445 B.C. They came to rebuild the broken walls of the city and its gates which had been destroyed by fire. Nehemiah created a new political reality in Judah, making it an autonomous region within the Persian Empire.

With the accomplishments of Ezra and Nehemiah, the return of tens of thousands of Jews from exile in Babylon to Palestine, the restoration of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple, the prophecy concerning Cyrus and the 70 years of Jewish punishment was complete.

The fulfillment of prophecy is a major proof that the Sovereign God does exist and that he has the power and authority to control the destiny of humanity. Moreover, the fulfillment of prophecy tells us that God's plan for humanity is right on schedule.

By B.L. Cocherell
The main focus of almost all biblical prophecy is on the 12 tribes of national Israel. These prophecies show that all of these tribes will play a major part in the fulfillment of many prophecies concerning world events before and after Jesus returns to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

The Bible nowhere teaches or even implies that any of the 12 tribes of Israel will cease to exist as national entities. In fact, the biblical record clearly shows that these people are still God's chosen people through whom he is working out his awesome plan for the salvation of humanity. The question is where are these people and what are their national identities today?

The two major keys which unlock almost all biblical prophecy are understanding the importance of the various tribes of national Israel in relation to the Sovereign God's awesome plan for humanity and who and where the majority of these tribes are located today. Without this understanding it is impossible to reconcile prophecies concerning national Israel with the reality of history, the events of the end of the age, and humanity's future after Christ returns.

Abraham

The patriarch Abraham was given an unconditional promise by the Creator God that through him all nations on earth would be blessed. The Creator told him that this blessing would flow through the descendants of his son Isaac who was born from his wife Sarah, but not through his first son Ishmael who was born from Sarah's servant Hagar:

"Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen.18:18-19 NIV).

"The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Gen.22:15-18 NIV).
Rebekah's family spoke to her of God's promise to Abraham as she left to become Isaac's wife.

"And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said to her, You are our sister, be you the mother of thousands of millions, and let your seed possess the gate of those which hate them" (Gen.24:59-60 KJV).

Isaac Repeated This Promise To Jacob:

"And his father Isaac said to him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed: Therefore God give you of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve you, and nations bow down to you: be Lord over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you: cursed be every one that curses you, and blessed be he that blesses you " (Gen.27:26-29 KJV).

God reminded Jacob of his promise when he renamed him Israel:

"And God said to him, your name is Jacob: your name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be your name: and he called his name Israel. And God said to him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of you, and kings shall come out of your loins: And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to you I will give it, and to your seed after you will I give the land" (Gen.35:10-12 KJV).

Biblical prophecy clearly shows that the Creator's original promise to Abraham will reach its final fulfillment through the descendants of the patriarch Israel:

"Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Gen.28:10-15 NIV).
In order to understand where the world is headed in the near future, it is important to know the identity of the nations of Israel as they exist today. When most people think of national Israel, they think of the Jewish nation of Israel in Palestine; however, the Jewish nation of Israel is not the national Israel that is spoken of in many biblical prophecies. The Jewish nation of Israel is only a very small part of national Israel.

It is an historical fact that all twelve tribes of national Israel exist in today's world. The so-called lost ten tribes of Israel are not lost; these tribes have grown into nations that can be easily identified. Biblical and secular history and the genealogy of the royal families of Europe provide the information necessary to identify the nations of Israel today, as well as the identity of the lawful monarch who presently reigns on the throne of David over the twelve tribes of the kingdom of Israel.

A Promise to National Israel

"This is what the Lord says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the Lord Almighty is his name: "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the Lord, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me."

This is what the Lord says: "Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done," declares the Lord" (Jer.31:35-37 NIV).

The Creator God said that national Israel would never cease to be a nation and that he would never reject them as his chosen people.

Rulership and Birthright

"As for the sons of Israel's oldest son Reuben, Reuben dishonored his father by sleeping with one of his father's wives; therefore, his birthright was given to the sons of his half brother, Joseph. So the official genealogy is not reckoned according to the birthright—Judah prevailed above his brothers and from him the chief ruler was to come, but the birthright Joseph's" (1.Chron.5:1-2 Para.).

This prophecy shows that the principal ruler of national Israel must always come from the tribe of Judah (Gen.49:10), and that the birthright inheritance of wealth and prosperity would to be given to the tribe of Joseph through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen.48:1-6; 49:26).

The Promise to King David

The Creator God made many unconditional promises which were not tied to the performance of people or their descendants. One of these promises was made to King David. He was promised that one of his descendants would continue to be the legal monarch of the tribes of Israel forever, even into the future beyond Christ's return to rule the earth:
"That night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying: "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord says: . . . I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth . . . . Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.' Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation" (2.Sam.7:4;9;16-17 NIV). See also 1.Chron.17:16-27.

"And king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord for ever" (1.Kgs.2:45 KJV).

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: your faithfulness shall you establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn to David my servant, your seed will I establish for ever, and build up your throne to all generations. Selah" (Psa.89:1-4 KJV).

"For this says the Lord; David shall never lack a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel" (Jer.33:17 KJV).

The Messiah and David's Throne

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this" (Isa.9:6-7 NIV).

"And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk.1:31-33 KJV).

Prophecies clearly show that the Messiah will ascend to the throne of David and rule forever. However, David's throne must exist before this can happen.

The Promise to the Twelve

The twelve disciples were promised that they would reign with Christ over the tribes of Israel when he begins to rule the earth:
"Then Peter said to him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed you; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you, That you which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt.19: 27-29 KJV). See also Lk.22:28-30.

The prophet Ezekiel recorded that, after the return of the Messiah, David will again assume his kingly duties in a rulership capacity over Israel:

"Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever" (Ezk.37:23-25 KJV). See also Jer.30:8-11; Ezk.34:22-24.

For all of the prophecies concerning the throne of David to be fulfilled there must always be a descendant from David's royal bloodline alive on earth.

Evidence of God's Promise

"And the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, This says the Lord; If you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister to me. Moreover, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, Consider you not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the Lord has chosen, he has even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. This says the Lord; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them" (Jer.33:19-26 KJV).
God has kept his promise to David that one of his descendants would always be the lawful ruler of Israel. The moon, and stars still exist and they continue in their respective orbits, and there are millions of king David's descendants and Levites on earth. God is still honoring his promise to king David to maintain one of his descendants as the lawful ruler of the kingdom of Israel and expand the population of the Levites throughout the earth. The question is not whether the royal descendants of David and the Levites exist on earth; the question is who and where are the descendants of David and the Levites.

The Destruction of National Israel

In order to clearly understand where the throne of David is located and who and where the Israelites are today, one must understand that national Israel as it existed under king David and king Solomon became a major regional military power with great wealth and prosperity, but this great nation came to a sudden end and became two separate nations after Solomon's death. Although Solomon was very wise, he did not always make the right choices. His choices concerning his marriage to many foreign women led him into worshiping their gods which resulted in the destruction of national Israel after his death:

"The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen" (1.Kgs.11:9-13 NIV).

David's descendants did cease to rule over the whole kingdom of Israel and the tribes of Israel did cease to exist as a single nation. And after the death of Solomon, the leaders of all the tribes of Israel came to Shechem and attempted to make Solomon's son Rehoboam king of Israel. However, they were not successful because of Solomon's rebellion against God.

2.Chronicles 10:1-19 NIV

Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all the Israelites had gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and all Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: "Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you." Rehoboam answered, "Come back to me in three days." So the people went away" (vs.1-5).
Here, Jeroboam asks for relief from the taxes, tribute, and labor conscription which were required while Solomon was king.

Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. "How would you advise me to answer these people?" he asked. They replied, "If you will be kind to these people and please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants." But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. He asked them, "What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, 'Lighten the yoke your father put on us'?" The young men who had grown up with him replied, "Tell the people who have said to you, 'Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter'—tell them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions" (vs.6-11).

Rehoboam made a fatal decision in not listening to the council of the elders who clearly understood that the proper response would ensure the people's loyalty to the young king:

Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, "Come back to me in three days." The king answered them harshly. Rejecting the advice of the elders, he followed the advice of the young men and said, "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions." So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from God, to fulfill the word the Lord had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite. When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: "What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!" So all the Israelites went home. But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them. King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labor, but the Israelites stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day" (vs.12-19).

Two Separate Nations

The separation of the northern tribes from the southern tribe of Judah resulted in the formation of two separate nations: The House of Judah under king Rehoboam and the House of Israel under king Jeroboam. Biblical prophecy clearly shows that all the tribes of national Israel will not be reunited into a single nation until after Christ returns. Until that time, the tribes of Israel will remain separated into their various national identities.
The House of Judah

Because the temple of God was located in Jerusalem, which is within the boundaries of Judea, the tribe of Judah, the priesthood, most of the Levites, and many from the tribe of Benjamin remained loyal to Rehoboam. The people who are considered Jews today are predominantly a mixture of the tribes of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin.

The House of Israel

The northern tribes that followed Jeroboam became known as the House of Israel and formed their own government, worship system, and religious center in Samaria.

Although there are people from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi (i.e., the House of Judah) scattered among the tribal nations of Israel, the House of Israel is not Jewish. The ten tribal nations of Israel are predominantly comprised of the eight single tribes of Asher, Dan, Gad, Issachar, Nephthali, Ruben, Simeon, Zebulun, and the two tribes of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh. These ten tribal nations are the peoples who are commonly called the lost tribes of Israel.

David's Descendants Today

It is a fact that no descendant of king David sits on a throne ruling over the Jewish nation of Israel today. Moreover, none of his descendants rule over the combined tribes of the House of Israel. Therefore, unless God has broken his promise to king David, we must look elsewhere for his royal descendants. Remember that God only promised that his bloodline would not disappear, not that one of his descendants would always actively occupy a throne over a sovereign nation of Israel comprised of all the tribes.

The fact that the Kingdom of Israel does not occupy the Promised Land today and a descendant of king David has not always occupied a literal throne over a functioning civil government of Israel does not mean that David's royal bloodline ceased to exist. The historical record clearly shows that almost all the royal families of Europe are related in one way or another to the royal house of David through marriage.

The historical record clearly shows that descendants of David's royal family are alive today and that whoever occupies the British throne has the scepter of Judah and is the only lawful ruler of the Kingdom of Israel. But, how can a monarch of national Israel rule when there is no territory, no active government, and no subjects to rule over? The answer is that the monarch maintains the office of rulership while in exile from the homeland and waits for the kingdom to be reestablished.

National Israel still exists today. The land God gave to Israel still exists although it is mostly occupied by foreigners. Israel's lawful government still exists, but its monarch is in exile. Israel's laws still exist and are codified in the Torah. And there are hundreds of millions of Israelites scattered throughout the world. National Israel exists today,
but its monarch and most of its citizens are in exile waiting to be returned to their homeland after the Messiah returns to establish God's government on earth.

The Messiah and the House of Israel

Although the Messiah was born a Jew and taught in Judea, his primary mission was not to the House of Judah; it was to the ten tribes of the House of Israel:

"A woman of Canaan came and beseeched him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, you Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he did not reply to her. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, Send her away; for she cries out to us. But he replied, I am only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then she came and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he said, It is not fitting to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, This is true Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus replied to her and said, O woman, your faith is great: let it be as you have asked. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Matt.15:22-28 KJV Para.).

There is credible evidence that, in his efforts to reach out to the lost tribes of Israel, Jesus traveled with his uncle Joseph who was an international merchant involved in the tin trade in the British Isles. This situation allowed Jesus ample opporunity to visit many major population centers of the ten tribes of the House of Israel during the eighteen years prior to the beginning of his ministry in Judea. A major misconception is that the House of Israel was physically lost; however, Jesus was speaking about them being spiritually lost because of their acceptance and practice of pagan worship systems.

The Jews rejected Christ's teaching and murdered him and the House of Judah still rejects him and the message he brought. Moreover, the ten tribes of the House of Israel who are scattered throughout the world have rejected him by accepting a false Christ, a different gospel message, and a perverted form of his heavenly Father's worship system.

Go to the House of Israel

Another clue to locating the tribes of Israel today is tracing the travels of Christ and the apostles on their various journeys to preach the Father's good news message to these tribes. The Messiah said that he was sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel and he told his twelve disciples to preach the Kingdom of God to the House of Israel. After choosing twelve men and teaching them his heavenly Father's good news message, he commissioned them to go to the ten tribes of the House of Israel with this same message:
"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter you not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt.10:5-7 KJV).

It can be assumed that the twelve men carried out these instructions to some degree during Christ's ministry. Moreover, it is a historical fact that after Christ's death the apostles began a concentrated effort to preach the Kingdom of God and the message of salvation in great power. Moreover, as they went about proclaiming the Father's good news message to the world (Mk.16:14-20), they also continued to proclaim it to the tribes of the House of Israel.

The historical record of the apostles' travels as they carried out their mission to preach the Father's good news message to the ten tribes of the House of Israel identifies many of the geographic locations where these tribes lived.

The Book of Acts and the epistles document some of the apostles' travels, and secular history, tradition, and legend contain much information showing that the apostles did indeed travel to areas known to be inhabited with vast numbers of the descendants of Israel's ten tribes. These areas included Armenia, Asia Minor, France, the British Isles, the island of Patmos, Rome, Syria, North Africa, India, Persia, Ethiopia, Turkey, Greece, Southern Arabia, Spain, and the area formerly known as the Soviet Union.

Although much of what is recorded in tradition and legend about the travels of the apostles must be viewed with some scepticism and some of the accounts may not be true, most of what is recorded in secular history is most likely true. Moreover, there is no doubt that the apostles took the Father's good news message to the ten tribes of the House of Israel as they were instructed by Jesus.

NATIONAL ISRAEL TODAY

In order to help make the meaning of end-time prophecies more clear, this section contains a list of the nations that contain major concentrations of Israelites. Research indicates that the Israelites are among the world's wealthiest nations and occupy the world's choicest real-estate, and that God will make very sure that these nations have the Father's good news message proclaimed to them before Christ returns.

The following is a list of the tribes of Israel and their possible national identities today. This information is based on historical and linguistic evidence. Because biblical prophecy clearly shows that descendants of all the tribes are also scattered throughout the world's non-Israelitic nations, the individual Twelve Tribes cannot be identified with absolute certainty. Nevertheless, available information seems to support the following analysis (See Reference Works section):
Asher = Republic of South Africa: Gen.49:20
Benjamin = Norway: Gen.49:27
Dan = Ireland: Gen.49:16-18
Gad = Germany: Gen.49:19
Issachar = Finland: Gen.49:14-15
Joseph = Ephraim = Britain & United Kingdom: Gen.49:22-26
= Manasseh = USA: Gen.49:22-26
Judah = Israel (Jews): Gen.49:8-12, scattered in other nations
Levi = Scattered among other Israelitish nations: Gen.9:5-7
Naphthali = Sweden: Gen.49:21
Reuben = France: Gen.49:3-4
Simeon = Scattered among other Israelitish nations: Gen.49:5-7
Zebulun = Holland: Gen.49:13

The most dominant Tribes of Israel today are Ephraim and Manasseh. Together these two nations hold most of the world's wealth and military power.

REFERENCE WORKS

Although many books have been written concerning who the Ten Tribes of Israel are and where they are located today, the following books are a good beginning point for any detailed study into this subject.

Within the following books you will find concise reviews and historical documentation of the early beginnings of national Israel through to its division into the Houses of Judah and Israel and their current national identities, along with the travels of the 12 apostles as they proclaimed God the Father's good news message.

Although each author approaches these subjects from a slightly different perspective, the documentation provided when viewed as a whole proves beyond doubt that the Creator God has kept and is keeping his promise to Abraham concerning his descendants.

Books:

All the Apostles of the Bible by Herbert Lockyer, published by Zondervan, 5300 Patterson SE Grand Rapids, MI 49530, U.S.A. or on the internet at:

An examination of the ministries of the men chosen to declare the Father's message to the world. Included are the apostles, Jesus, and lesser known men who accompanied the apostles in their travels as they proclaimed God the Father's good news message.

Ephraim, The Gentile Children of Israel by Yair Davidi, published by Russell-Davis publishers, Yair Davidi P.O. Box 595, Jerusalem 91004, Israel or e-mail: britam@netvision.net.il

A compilation of many biblical, historical, and linguistic proofs showing that the British people are the tribe of Ephraim.
Joseph, The Israelite Destiny of America by Yair Davidi, published by Russell-Davis publishers, Yair Davidi P.O. Box 595, Jerusalem 91004, Israel or e-mail: britam@netvision.net.il

A compilation of many biblical, historical, and linguistic proofs showing that the United States of America can be identified as the tribe of Manasseh.


This book is our number one recommendation, because it contains the most information on the lost ten tribes in one book and is extremely well written and easy to understand.

The Traditions of Glastonbury by E. Raymond Capt Artisan Sales, P.O. Box 1497, Thousand Oaks, CA, 91360, U.S.A. or on the internet at: www.artisanpublishers.com/ray_capt/traditions_glastonbury.html

The silent years of Jesus between 12 and 30 and an examination of the historical records concerning Joseph of Arimathea, the great uncle of Jesus, as a provincial Roman Senator and metal merchant.


Archaeological discoveries and hidden symbolism reveal much about God that is relevant to Christians in this age.

Jacob's Pillar by E. Raymond Capt, Artisan Sales, P.O. Box 1497, Thousand Oaks, CA, 91360, U.S.A. or on the internet at: www.artisanpublishers.com/ray_capt/jacobs_pillar.html

A presentation of the cumulative evidence which reveals the fate of the Bible's most famous stone—The Stone of Destiny.


The Sonnini Manuscript better known as the "Long Lost Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles" gives the account of Paul's journey in Spain and Britain. It covers a portion of the period after Paul's two years of enforced residence in Rome.


Traces the activities of Jesus' disciples after his resurrection.

By B.L. Cocherell

b2w4
Many events that will dramatically impact every inhabitant of this planet, its governments, and its religions are now beginning to take place in the Middle East. All these events were prophesied many centuries ago and recorded in the Bible. In this chapter, we will explore some of these prophetic events to see how they relate to the Jews of today and the future.

When the prophecies about Judah are examined, it becomes clear that we are living in the end of an age. It is also clear that the inhabitants of the modern nation of Israel (the Israelis) are the focal point of many prophecies in the Bible.

The Historical Jew

In order to fully understand what the Bible says about the Jews, one must first understand that there is a difference between the House of Judah (the Jews) and the House of Israel (the other tribes of Israel).

King Solomon was the last king to reign over a single nation of Israel, which consisted of all the tribes of Israel. After his death, there was a civil war and Israel was divided into two separate nations. The northern ten tribes were called the House of Israel and the southern tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and parts of Levi were called the House of Judah.

Secular history and the Bible tell us that the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrian Empire in 721-718 B.C. Subsequently, its people were scattered throughout the world. These tribes lost their national identity and became known historically as the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. See 2.Kings for the story of the House of Israel's captivity.

The southern kingdom of Judah (the Jews) also rebelled against God and were taken captive by the Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar. Some of these people returned to the area of the Holy Land during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Then, in 70 A.D., Judah was completely destroyed as a nation by the Roman Empire and its people were scattered throughout the nations of the world.

Today, the descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel can be identified in existing nations. Most of these people are located in the geographical areas of North America, northwestern Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. The House of Judah (the Jews) are predominantly scattered among the nations where the descendants of the Lost Ten tribes of Israel are located. Since 1947 A.D., many of the House of Judah have been relocating to the Holy Land in the nation of Israel.
The Jews and the Holy Land

"For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem" (Joel 3:1 KJV). See also Joel 2:29-32.

"For in the days to come, says the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, says the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it" (Jer.30:3 KJV).

Both Joel and Jeremiah use the expression "to bring again the captivity," which means to bring them from a previous captivity and location back to the Holy Land. However, when will this occur?

Judah The Battle Horse

Zechariah is very clear in stating that the Jews (Israelis) in the end of the age will be instruments of war. This provides an interesting insight into how God does things; he sometimes uses the evil in people to accomplish his purpose. The Jews have been given special favor militarily because God has a task for them to accomplish. What we see prophetically is that the Jews were gathered into the nation of Israel and given control over the city of Jerusalem in order for God to fulfill the prophecies that surround the return of Christ:

"My anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the Lord of hosts has visited his flock the house of Judah, and has made them as his majestic horse in the battle. Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together. And they shall be like mighty men, who tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded" (Zech.10:3-5 KJV). See also Zech.9:11-13.

Biblical Prophecy and the Jews

Zechariah 12:2-10 KJV

The prophecies of Zechariah also confirm that the Jews, the nation of Israel, and Jerusalem are the focal point of biblical prophecy concerning many of the events that lead to the return of Christ:

"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling to all people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it" (vs.2-3).
Recent history and continuing events in and around the nation of Israel show the validity of verses two and three. These prophecies are continuing to be fulfilled. Since 1947, everyone that has meddled with the nation of Israel has had nothing but trouble. Their Islamic attackers have been cut off and defeated in every conflict.

**Devouring Flame**

No one can dispute the fact that the Israeli leaders and the Jews have been like a fiery torch among the dry wood. They have devoured their Islamic neighbors since 1947 as a fire devours wood. The Jews should have been instantly overwhelmed by their enemies when they declared independence in 1947, because the odds were heavily stacked against them; however, they survived as a nation because God has purposed that they survive in order to fulfill many prophecies that must be fulfilled before Christ's return:

"In that day, says the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem" (vs.4-6).

**God Defends The Jews**

"In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And he who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David; and the house of David shall be like God, like as the angel of the Lord before them" (v8).

Think back to 1947 when the Jews declared their independence. Their enemies came against them with superior manpower and equipment, yet the Israelis were like David fighting against Goliath. And like David, the Jews had God on their side of the conflict. Over the years, many incredible things have occurred, which benefitted the Israelis in battle. Although the Israelis may not have recognized it, the evidence of God's intervention on their behalf is abundant. It is not because the Israeli's are righteous, because they are not. They are blood-thirsty and brutal, just like many other nations. They only exist as a nation because God has a purpose for their existence.

**Enmity Toward The Jews**

"The envy also of Ephraim [Great Britain] shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off" (Isa.11:13 Para.).
Isaiah's prophecy looks to a time after the return of Christ when the house of David will be at peace with those of the house of Judah. The prophet Zechariah records that the nations represented by the royal houses of David will eventually lose their animosity toward the Jews (Zech.12:7). History has shown that a love-hate relationship exists between the Jews and the British whose royal family are direct descendants of king David. This sort of relationship also exists between the Jews and the inhabitants of North America and northwestern Europe who are predominantly the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel.

The Jews who live among the various nations of the Ten Tribes of Israel tend to be in positions of influence and power, and they control much of these nations' wealth. Because of their power and wealth there is a considerable amount of enmity between those of the other tribes and the Jews, yet there is a feeling of kinship toward the Jews of the nation of Israel.

The Temple in Jerusalem

The first major prophetic event leading up to the return of Christ, was the return of the Jews to the holy land in 1947 in order for them to occupy the land and to eventually control the city of Jerusalem. The second major prophetic event is the building of the temple in Jerusalem and the institution of the sacrificial system of worship.

The year 1947 was a pivotal year concerning the occupation of the Holy Land, because it is exactly forty nine years before 1996, and the Fall of 1996 began a 50th year. Is it possible that God designed the period of time between 1947 and 1996 around a Jubilee cycle (not a Jubilee year but a Jubilee cycle)? If so, the 50th year (a year of release) may have signified a release in prophetic events that will lead to building a temple in Jerusalem for the worship of the true God.

Before the next Jewish captivity, the Jews will be allowed to build a temple in Jerusalem for the worship of God. As a part of this worship they will institute the sacrificial system, which they will do for a short time before they are conquered and taken captive by an alliance of nations described in the Book of Revelation as the Beast.

A Time of Trouble for the Jews

"And it shall come to pass, that in all the land [Israel/the holy land], says the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech.13:8-9 Para.). See also Ezk.5:12; Zeph.1:1-18.

A time is coming when the Jewish nation of Israel is going to be conquered, the nation destroyed, and its people taken captive. According to biblical prophecy, this event will occur about 3½ years before Jesus Christ returns as King of kings. With the conquering of Israel, captivity
and severe trials will come upon the Jews. It is clear from the prophecies that the Jews will go through another holocaust at the hands of the nations that swore to protect them against aggressors and at the hands of their Islamic neighbors. According to chapter thirteen of Zechariah, at least 66% of the Jews will die and 33% will go into captivity.

Only those who heed the prophetic warnings to flee when they see the armies surround Jerusalem (Lk.21:20-21) will escape the invasion of Israel and the captivity to follow. It is not known how many Jews will ultimately survive this captivity but it is clear that less than 33% will live to see the return of Christ. That means over 67% of their entire population will perish.

The Battle of Armageddon

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of prayers: and they shall look on me whom they have pierced. . ." (Zech.12:9-10 Para.).

In verses nine and ten, "in that day" refers to a time near Christ's return when the Beast alliance of nations gather in the plain of Megeddo to do battle with Christ who is ready to conquer the earth. These armies will be completely destroyed at the hands of Jesus Christ. Joel 3:11-16; Zech.12:11; Rev.14:14-20; 16:12-16

"Let the nations be wakened, and come to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the nations all around. Put in the sickle for the harvest is ripe: come down: for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their light. The Lord will roar from Zion, and his voice from Jerusalem: and the heavens and earth shall quake: but the Lord is a refuge for his people, and a fortress to the sons of Israel" (Joel 3:12-16 Para.).

The valley of Jehoshaphat is just outside Jerusalem where the armies of the Beast system together with the Islamic nations will gather their forces to fight the returning Christ on the plains of Megeddo in the battle of Armageddon.

After these powerful events occur the Jews will repent (Joel 2:12-13) and turn to God. In the wilderness near the holy land, Jesus will then gather them and the other Israelites who survive the seven last plagues.
A Return From Captivity

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and stone the messengers God has sent you! How many times I wanted to put my arms around all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me! And so your temple will be abandoned and empty. From now on, I tell you, you will never see me again until you say, "God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt.23:37-39 GNB).

When Christ returns and his feet touch the Mount of Olives, he will begin to save the Jews out of the hands of their captors and bring them back from wherever they have been scattered throughout the world.

"The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be magnified against Judah" (Zech.12:7 Para.).

The glory of the house of David does not refer to the Jews; it refers to the other tribes of Israel who will be a part of the Beast alliance of nations and will have consented, if not participated, in the destruction of the Jewish nation of Israel. The glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem is more than likely a reference to the conquerors of the Jews who have occupied Jerusalem. At the time of Christ's return, there will be very few Jews living in Jerusalem because most of them will have been either killed or removed as captives.

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem [the Jews], the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech.12:10 Para.).

In the day of Christ's return as King of kings, he will destroy all nations that come against Jerusalem and he will give favor to the house of David (i.e., the ten tribes of Israel) and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the Jews). The Jews will finally acknowledge that their ancestors did indeed murder the Messiah for whom they had been looking, and they will weep bitterly when they realize this terrible truth.

SUMMARY

The prophecies clearly show that Israel will remain a sovereign nation until the time that God withdraws his protection and allows them to go into captivity about 3½ years before Christ returns. The city of Jerusalem and its Jewish inhabitants have been and will continue to be a cup of trembling to the whole world up to and including the time Christ returns and the great Battle of Armageddon.

By Vernon O. Jones
The fulfillment of Christ's prophecy concerning the destruction of the magnificent temple at Jerusalem not only reveals the year of Christ's crucifixion, but also ended one phase of God's plan for the salvation of humanity and ushered in the next phase—Christ's return to conquer and rule the earth.

In 40 B.C., the Roman senate appointed Herod, later known as Herod the Great, as the ruler of Judea. Herod had previously served as the governor of Galilee and was a personal friend of Mark Antony before Antony was defeated by Octavian. Later Herod became a friend of Octavian who became the first Roman emperor as Caesar Augustus.

Herod the Great ruled Judea for the next 36 years, during which time he began many huge building projects including the building of a new Temple in Jerusalem for the worship of God. From the beginning of the Temple project in 19 B.C., it took 46 years to complete the main building and another 36 years to finish the entire Temple complex. This was a huge undertaking which required a tremendous amount of labor and money. This new temple was said to be a larger and a more beautiful temple than the one that Solomon built.

The historian Josephus said that much of the exterior of the Temple was covered with gold that reflected the fiery rays of the sun. Moreover, he said that, from a distance, the Temple appeared like a mountain covered with snow. This was probably because those parts that were not covered with gold were made of white stone.

From what is said in many writings about Herod's Temple, it was indeed a magnificent structure of awesome proportions. However, four years after it's completion, it was totally destroyed and wiped from the face of the earth.

During Jesus' time, many of the Jews were so awe struck and impressed with the grandeur of the Temple that they replaced the worship of God with respect and reverence for the Temple complex itself. However, Jesus was not impressed with the Temple's physical structure, because he knew that the Sovereign God was greater than any building that man could construct, no matter how grand and beautiful it was.

THE PROPHECIES

Jesus prophesied both the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem; therefore, it is necessary to discuss both prophecies in order to clearly understand the events which happened 40 years later.
The Temple

"Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down" (Matt.24:1-8 NIV). See also Lk.21:5-6.

In his well known prophecy about the end of the age recorded by Matthew and Luke, Jesus predicted the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem which came to pass 40 years after his death and resurrection. Because the disciples as most of the Jews of their day (especially the Essenes and the Pharisees) were looking for a Messiah to come who would restore national Israel, set up an earthly kingdom, and destroy the existing Temple and build a new one in its place (See Ezekiel, chapters 40 to 47), they were anxious to know when this would happen. They asked,"When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matt.24:3 NIV).

Many today believe the answer Jesus gave to his disciples referred to the time they were living in. Although in a general sense, some of what he said would apply to their age, Jesus did not answer the first part of their question:"when will this happen?" Instead he began to answer their other two questions—"what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"—with a general overview of the things that would happen at the end of this age just prior to his return:

"Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains" (Matt.24:4-8 NIV).

After Jesus' resurrection from the dead the disciples asked a similar question to the one that they had asked him after their Temple visit, during which he told them about world events at the end of this age:

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said to them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power" (Acts 1:6-7 KJV).

Looking back on the task that Jesus gave to the disciples after his resurrection (Matt.28;19-20) and the ensuing history of the early church, not allowing these men to know the date of the destruction of the Temple, his coming to power, and the end of the age of human rule on earth helped keep them focused on their task and from being discouraged, because these events were not to happen as soon as they expected.
Jerusalem

There were two occasions on which Jesus foretold the destruction of Jerusalem that would occur in 70 A.D.. The first was when he entered the city and the people laid their clothes on the ground before him, which was the custom to honor someone of great importance, such as a king:

"Then the crowds spread out their robes along the road ahead of him, and as they reached the place where the road started down from the Mount of Olives, the whole procession began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles Jesus had done. "God has given us a King!" they exulted. "Long live the King! Let all heaven rejoice! Glory to God in the highest heavens!" But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, "Sir, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!" He replied, "If they keep quiet, the stones along the road will burst into cheers! But as they came closer to Jerusalem and he saw the city ahead, he began to cry. "Eternal peace was within your reach and you turned it down," he wept, "and now it is too late. Your enemies will pile up earth against your walls and encircle you and close in on you, and crush you to the ground, and your children within you; your enemies will not leave one stone upon another, for you have rejected the opportunity God offered you." Then he entered the Temple and began to drive out the merchants from their stalls, saying to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple is a place of prayer; but you have turned it into a den of thieves" (Lk.19:36-46 TLB).

It is important to understand that Jesus was no ordinary man, he was the Creator God who voluntarily gave up his immortal existence to become human and die for the sins of humanity. Jesus understood that, although the plan for the salvation of humanity required certain events to take place, if people would repent of their evil ways, these events could be modified and worked out in other ways that would allow for less pain and suffering in order to fulfill God's plan for humanity.

Although Jesus understood his heavenly Father was merciful, he also understood the heart of the vast majority of the Jews and their leadership and that they would not repent of their evil ways. This is one of the reasons he wept over Jerusalem as he foretold its destruction.

The second time Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem was as he was being led to the place of his execution. The streets along the way were packed with his enemies as well as with those who enthusiastically followed his teaching and were hopeful that he was indeed the prophesied Messiah:

"And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs
that never bore, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us” (Lk.23:27-30 KJV).

What Jesus said to those who were showing their concern for him and the injustice that was about to befall him foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the horrible starvation, sickness, and death which would come upon them before and after the Romans destroyed the city and its Temple. It is also possible that what he said to these women may also have some application during the end of this age just before his return. See Hos.10:1-10; Rev.6:12-17.

PASSOVER 30 A.D.

The Passover season of 30 A.D. began much as it had in previous years. Thousands of pilgrims from all over the world crowded into Jerusalem. Because they were concerned with preparing for the Passover, they did not realize that this particular Passover would be the most important event in all of human history. It was on this Passover that the Lamb of God would be sacrificed for the sins of humanity.

Jesus died about 3 p.m. on Friday afternoon of 30 A.D. on the second of two authorized Passover ceremonies documented in the chronology of the gospel records. His death set into motion a series of events and warnings to the Jews which were meant to show that indeed the Jews had murdered the Messiah and that his prophecy concerning the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem would come to pass.

The Earthquake

There were three simultaneous events which happened during the earthquake at Jesus' death that are of major importance to the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem:

- The veil of separation torn from top to bottom
- The tombs opened and the dead raised to life
- Jesus acknowledged as the Son of God

The Curtain of Separation

History seems to indicate that there were two curtains in Herod's Temple: One at the huge gated entry into the Temple and the other separating the Holy of Holies and the main sanctuary. These curtains were said to be 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and as thick as the palm of a man's hand. We are told that these curtains were so heavy that 300 priests were needed to manipulate each one. The curtain being torn from top to bottom was a foreboding omen indicating that God's hand had torn it in two and that his presence was leaving that holy place. (See the Jewish Talmud, Yoma 39b).
The curtain separated the Holy Place from everyone but the high priest. The Holy Place was where the presence of God dwelled on the mercy seat. The curtain was a constant reminder to the Israelites that their access to God depended on another physical human, and that this access was only granted through the physical works of the sacrificial system.

"And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the spirit. And the veil of the temple was torn in half from the top to the bottom" (Mk.15:37-38 KJV).

"And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life" (Matt.27:50-52 NIV).

Consider the enormous significance of this monumental historical event. Picture Jesus' loud and painful cry "it is finished" (Jn.19:30), as the Roman solder plunges a spear deep into his side and his life blood drains to the ground. At the same instant, the Temple veil tears apart as a powerful earthquake shakes Jerusalem. Furthermore, picture the high priest who having just condemned Jesus to death the night before was splashing the blood of Passover lambs against the altar of God.

When Jesus cried out "it is finished" and the curtain tore, the relationship between God and humanity was altered forever. The tearing of the curtain of separation from top to bottom forever opens the way for all humanity to eventually fellowship directly with God the Father.

This is the moment in time that Jesus spoke of to the woman of Samaria when he foretold that the existing worship system would be abolished, and that those who wanted to worship God would no longer need to travel to a specific location to worship:

"The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where it is necessary to worship. Jesus said to her, Woman believe me that an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (Jn.4:19-23 Para.).

No longer would a physical man be required to offer animal sacrifices for sins. Any who truly worship the Father can now stand before him and present their own cause to him, knowing that he will hear and consider their prayer because of the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ.

The apostle Paul explains this improved relationship between God and non-Israelites to the elect in the city of Ephesus:
"Wherefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at the time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in the ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph.2:11-16 KJV).

With the tearing of the curtain, all who worship the Sovereign God, whether Jew or Gentile, have access to the throne of mercy by the one and final sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. See Heb.4:15-16; 6:18-19; 9:1-15; 10:19-22.

"For through him we both have access by one spirit to the Father. Now therefore you are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph.2:18-19 KJV).

The Dead Raised

The earthquake and resurrection of the righteous dead at the death of Jesus pertains to a number of prophetic events for that time and the future.

This event was evidence that God had fulfilled his promise contained in the many prophecies about the redemption of humanity. A way was now open for all who would truly worship God to have victory over sin and death. This event also pointed toward the future when a great earthquake will shake the entire earth before Christ returns to gather the righteous dead of all ages to meet him in the air. See 1.Thes.4:16-17.

This resurrection of the dead shows the following:

- Christ's blood is life-giving (pictured in the blood of the Passover lamb) and has now wiped away the penalty of sin (Rom.6:23) for all those who only had their sins covered by the sacrifice of animals.
- There will be a time when all those who have or will have lived a righteous life will be given eternal and immortal life at the return of Christ.
- The great enemy death has lost its power over humanity through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ.
The Son of God

"Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt.27:54 Para.). See also Lk.23:47.

The Jews had rejected Christ as the Messiah and murdered him as their fathers had murdered many others whom God had sent to them to teach his laws and ways of life. To their shame, it was a Roman centurion, not an Israelite, who recognized and acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God. See Psa.118:22-24; Jer.8:9; Matt.13:57; 21:42.

Because of their rejection of the Messiah and his message the Jews would now pay a heavy price. The magnificent structure which symbolized God's presence and on which the Jews lavished much praise and showed great reverence would be destroyed along with their beloved city.

The Temple Gates

The Jewish Talmud says that 40 years before the Temple was destroyed the gates of the temple opened by themselves, until Rabbi Yohanan B. Zakkai rebuked them (i.e., the gates) saying, "Hekel, Hekel, why do you alarm us? We know that you are destined to be destroyed" (Yoma 39b).

The priests understood that, for Ezekiel's prophecy to be fulfilled, the existing temple would have to be destroyed and a new one built; however, because they did not understand the prophecies concerning the Messiah for their time, they did not understand the supernatural opening of the gates to mean that the old system of atonement was being replaced with a new one.

The Sanhedrin

The Sanhedrin officiated from the Chamber of Hewn Stones which was about 120 feet southeast of the Temple and its enormous stone lintel, which was at least 30 feet long, weighed some 30 tons and had cracked during the earthquake at the Messiah's death.

History tells us that the Sanhedrin moved from their opulent surroundings in the Chamber of Hewn Stones to lesser accommodations shortly after the earthquake. Because there is no record of the Sanhedrin being forced by the Romans to move from the Temple (which would have caused a major political crisis), one can assume that the Sanhedrin moved because the earthquake had so damaged the building that it was unsafe for them to continue to meet there.
It is interesting that, prior to the Messiah's crucifixion in 30 A.D., the Romans had taken away the Sanhedrin's authority to execute criminals (See Jn.18:31; Talmud Sanh.1:1,7:2). The last judgement the Sanhedrin made from the Temple region was to sentence the Messiah and Creator of humanity to death. From 30 A.D. to the time of this writing no Sanhedrin has officiated from the Temple region in Jerusalem. With the departure of the Sanhedrin from the Chamber of Hewn Stones, the law no longer went forth from the Temple.

Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the Sanhedrin was banished from their official residence to the trading station on the Temple Mount (Shabbat 15a), and eventually off the Mount altogether.

40 YEARS OF WARNINGS

Many wonder why God waited 40 years after Jesus' death and resurrection to fulfill his prophecy about the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. First, the number 40 in the Bible is symbolic of trial, testing, and punishment. Second, waiting 40 years shows God's patience in allowing the Jews time to repent and turn back to him with proper behavior and worship so that he could bless them instead of punishing them.

Although the Temple and city were not destroyed until 70 A.D., the supernatural events that occurred on the day the Messiah was murdered were only a few of the many warnings given to the Jewish people prior to the destruction of their beloved Temple and city. On the Day of Atonement in 30 A.D. a series of two consecutive warnings began which were repeated on this specific day of worship for another 39 years.

A Black Stone and A Scarlet Thread

"And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat" (Lev.16:8 KJV).

There is much debate over exactly what kind of objects the lots were. However, the information found in the Babylonian Talmud and the Mishnah indicates that the lots were two stones—one white and one black. The white stone had the words "For the Lord" written on it, and the black stone had the words "For Azazel" (i.e., the goat that is sent away or banished) written on it.

These two stones were placed into a container and the container shaken; then, without looking into the container, the high priest would put his right hand into the container and draw out one of the lots.
The Babylonian Talmud shows that for two hundred years before 30
A.D., the first stone to appear in the right hand of the high priest
randomly fluctuated each year between the white and black stone. One
would expect this type of randomness, because the Creator God
selected the more perfect goat to be slain for the sins of the people. But,
beginning with the Day of Atonement in 30 A.D. (the year of the death
and resurrection of Jesus Christ), the black stone appeared in the right
hand of the high priest for the next 39 years.

The chances of the black stone (For Azazal) appearing 40 consec-
tutive times in the right hand of the high priest is over a trillion to one
according to Pascal's table of numerical odds.

The continual appearance of the black stone in the right hand of the
high priest was surely a sign of God's displeasure with the House of
Judah and a warning for them to repent.

The fulfillment of the prophetic black stone came after forty years of
continuous warning when the Temple and Jerusalem were destroyed in
70 A.D. by the Roman Empire.

**The Scarlet Thread**

On the Day of Atonement, a scarlet wool thread was placed on the
doors of the sanctuary. It was said that this thread turned white when the
live goat was set free. But, beginning on the Day of Atonement in 30
A.D., this thread never turned white again. See Yoma 39b, Babylonian
Talmud and pages 166, 170 Mishnah, by Danby.

Clearly, the failure of the scarlet thread to turn white was another sign
of God's disapproval of Israel's worship of him and their impending
punishment if they did not repent. See Isa.1:18.

**THE REBELLION**

Shortly after the beginning of 63 A.D. and while Jerusalem was still a
peaceful and thriving city, Jesus the son of Ananus began proclaiming
and warning of the coming destruction to Jerusalem. For his continued
effort to warn of the impending disaster (which lasted seven years and
five months according to Josephus) he was ridiculed and beaten.

Three years after Jesus the son of Ananus began his prophetic
warnings, and in the Spring of 66 A.D., the Jews of Judea began a full
scale rebellion against Rome.

Besides the continual warnings of the son of Ananus, the Jews also
received a number of supernatural warnings of the coming destruction of
the Temple and Jerusalem.

The Jewish historian Josephus recorded several dramatic events and
warnings that concerned the Temple worship system at Jerusalem (War,
Book 6, ch.5.) and foretold the end of the Temple worship system at
Jerusalem. The following are just a few of the many warnings of
impending disaster to come upon Jerusalem.
1. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread in 66 A.D., at about 3 in the morning, a light as bright as daylight appeared around the altar for half an hour. Although some thought it was a good sign, the scribes understood it to be a precursor to the supernatural events that followed during the Feast:
   • A heifer being led for sacrifice was said to have given birth to a lamb in the midst of the Temple.
   • Around midnight, during the Feast, the huge eastern gate of the inner court of the temple, which was made of brass and normally took twenty men to shut, opened on its own. Josephus says that this was understood by knowledgeable men to mean that the Temple's protection had vanished and that the gate was opened for the benefit of their enemies. These enlightened men publicly declared that this sign foreshadowed the disaster that was coming on them (Wars IV,5,3).

2. On the twenty first of the month of Iyar, just before sunset, chariots and soldiers in armor were seen running about in the clouds around the city. See Lk.21:20.

3. During the night portion of the day of Pentecost in 66 A.D., as the priests were entering the inner court of the Temple, they felt a quaking and heard a great noise and a sound like a great multitude of voices saying, "Let us remove hence."

4. Jewish historical records state that the shekinah glory departed the Temple at that time and remained over the mount of olives for three and a half years, during which time, a voice could sometimes be heard coming from the mount pleading for the Jews to repent. See Midrash Lamentations 2:11. It is said that, just before the Roman's final siege of Jerusalem, that this light which appeared over the Mount of Olives disappeared into the heavens.

The Jews failed to heed these and many other warnings to repent of their sins and return to their God in humble obedience. If indeed the nation of Israel began its covenant relationship with the Creator God on the day of Pentecost at the foot of Mount Sinai, it ended this relationship on the day of Pentecost in 66 A.D.

**Destroyed in 70 A.D.**

By the summer of 68 A.D., Jews were nearing defeat by the Roman legions and in 69 A.D., Vespasian was made emperor of Rome and gave his son Titus the honor of delivering the final death blows to the rebellious Jews and their capital city.
In The Wars of the Jews, Book 6, Josephus notes that, on the eighth day of the Roman month Lous (Jewish month Ab), the ramps were finished and Titus ordered the battering-rams brought up and made ready for an assault on the Temple. With the battering-rams in place the Roman siege of Jerusalem, which began at Passover that year, would come to an end.

As soon as the walls were breached on the 9th of Ab in 70 A.D., a Roman military force of about 30,000 troops under the command of Titus marched into Jerusalem and began a systematic slaughter of the Jews and the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem—exactly as Jesus foretold 40 years earlier.

The Romans brutally slaughtered an estimated 600,000 people in Jerusalem including many of the Passover visitors who had been trapped there for the 143 days during the Roman siege. Many of the people who were not killed by Roman soldiers were shipped off to the gladiatorial games, Roman mines, and otherwise exiled from Judea and scattered throughout the Roman empire and other nations. By the year 73 A.D., all traces of a self-ruling Jewish nation had completely disappeared.

Josephus records that the Romans put the city and the Temple to the torch and that these fires were still burning a month later on the eighth day of the Roman month Gorpieus (Jewish month Elul).

The magnificent Temple that Herod had built was completely destroyed as the fires raged inside and out. These fires were so hot that the gold fittings, and the gold gilding inside and on it's outside walls melted and ran into the cracks between and in the stones. During the pillaging of the Temple these stones were broken up to get at the gold. Therefore, fulfilling Jesus' prophecy that no stone would be left on another—the destruction was total, just as Jesus foretold.

**Summary**

The Temple Solomon built was destroyed by fire on the 9th of Ab in 585 or 586 B.C. (depending on which biblical scholar is doing the research). Just 656 or 657 years later on the 9th of Ab in 70 A.D., the Temple that Herod built was also destroyed.

The destruction of both Solomon's Temple and Herod's Temple on the 9th of Ab seems to indicate that, when God's patience comes to an end with his chosen people, he removes his presence and the physical symbolism of his presence from among them to be a witness to future generations that there is a price to pay for disobedience to him.

Although the events shortly before and after the Roman destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem were horrible in terms of human suffering, there have been events in Jewish history since then that have been even more horrible, such as the extermination of millions of Jews during World War Two.
Many biblical prophecies concerning the next temple to be built at Jerusalem for the worship of the Creator God clearly show that God will only allow sacrifices to be performed there for 1,150 days after which great trouble will befall the Jews. During this time of trouble, the atrocities committed against the Jews during World War Two will seem minor in comparison. This period of trouble is to last 3 ½ years and will come not only upon the Jews, but upon other Israelites from the ten tribes and the entire world as the forces of evil become more and more aware that their rule of earth is drawing to an end. It is during this time that the Sovereign God begins in earnest the final preparation for his Son's return to set up his kingdom over the earth.

The fulfillment of prophecy is a major proof that the Sovereign God does exist and that he has the power and authority to control the destiny of humanity. Moreover, the fulfillment of prophecy tells us that God's plan for humanity is right on schedule.

By B.L. Cocherell
CHAPTER
SEVEN
DISAPPEARANCE OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The Sovereign Father’s elect children who compose his earthly family of kings and priests are not immune to prophetic punishment. The fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the disappearance of the apostolic church reveals why there are so many different professing Christian churches today and why they all believe and teach so many different things about God and the Bible.

This chapter reveals what happened to the early church and explains the three church ages that exist before Christ returns.

THE DYNAMIC EVANGELIZING CHURCH

Shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we find a dynamic evangelizing church spreading God’s truth throughout the world. However, as dynamic as this church was, it virtually disappeared from history after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. From 70 to 120 A.D., there was very little recorded about the true church of God. When historians began to write about the church again, they wrote of a dramatically different church from the one that embraced the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles. Today, we find churches that call themselves Christian, yet the vast majority of them do not even faintly resemble the early church.

Today, Christianity is one of the world’s largest religions. There are thousands of Christian organizations and congregational associations which claim to be Christians and claim to worship and serve the God of the Bible. Each professes to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ as expounded in the pages of the Bible and each believe that it has a keen understanding of the Bible and God’s will for humanity.

In this age, Christian organizations and congregational associations offer a variety of religious experiences. Whatever one’s approach to religion, there is a Christian organization or congregational association that can be found in order to fill one’s desire for religious expression.

The choices of Christian churches range from one extreme to another: small personal groups, large crowds, quite scholarly and intellectual organizations, noisy, frenzied charismatic churches, giant cathedrals or evangelistic tents. There seems to be no end to the choices a person has when seeking a religious experience.
Most of these Christian organizations and congregational associations are separated by major doctrinal differences about subjects that are extremely important to one's salvation. There are many differing philosophies and concepts about how to worship the God of the Bible, and there is much confusion about what God expects of each person who wants to worship and serve him. These doctrinal differences and certain incompatible attitudes and behaviors between these various Christian organizations and congregational associations should cause anyone who is truly serious about their salvation to seriously question why there are so many different competing Christian churches and philosophies.

The problem is not with not having enough choices; the problem is which choice is the right choice. There are tens of thousands of separate Christian organizations, associations, and philosophies that profess to follow Jesus Christ. But, how do you know that the church of your choice is God's choice?

Many people frankly admit that they attend a specific church because their friends also go there, or because of its size, its standing in the community, its location, or its parking facility.

Only a small number of people who attend Christian churches claim to have spent some time researching what the early church taught before choosing a church to attend, and few wonder whether the doctrines of the church that they attend truly conform to what the early church taught.

**Different Perceptions**

It seems very strange indeed that most of the various Christian organizations and congregational associations use the same Bible on which to base their beliefs and lifestyles, but they all differ in how they perceive what is written in this book.

Professing Christians often say, "It doesn't really matter what you believe, just as long as you believe in God and the Bible." But, it must matter somewhat because not all professing Christians hold the same beliefs. Can all of these conflicting Christian beliefs and philosophies be right? Logically, if any one of them are right, the rest must be wrong.

Obviously, everyone who professes Christianity believes that their particular religious philosophy will get them to heavenly bliss more quickly and efficiently than all of the others. If one does not believe this, they are settling for second best. Is one Christian philosophy or religious practice just as good as another?

**WHERE IS THE CHURCH THAT CHRIST BUILT?**

Does the church that Jesus Christ built after his death and resurrection exist on earth today? And if it does exist, is it doing the same work that Jesus commissioned the early church to do? If such a church does exist one will have to look outside popular Christianity, because a short study into the beliefs and teachings of the early church will reveal that most popular Christian beliefs conflict with the teachings of the early church.
In order to clearly understand why there is so much confusion and competition within the Christian Community today, one must view the church that Jesus Christ built in the context of the three distinct church ages that will have existed before his return to rule the earth. Once one has some knowledge of what transpired during the first two church ages and what will transpire during the churches' third age, the following questions can easily be answered:

• What constitutes the church that Christ built?
• What caused the demise of the early church?
• Did the early church disappear and cease to exist?
• Why are there so many Christian denominations?
• Why do not all Christians believe the same doctrines?
• Does it matter how or where a person worships God?
• If the true church of God exists today, where is it?

WHAT CONSTITUTES THE CHURCH CHRIST BUILT?

When Jesus said, "I will build my church," what was he going to build? To recognize the true church today and in the future, one must first understand exactly what the church is that Christ built.

The English word church is translated from the Greek word ekklesia, which means calling out (i.e., a popular meeting, an assembly, especially a religious congregation). The word church simply means a group of people meeting together. Attaching the word church to a group or organization does not necessarily make it a part of the Body of Christ.

In the purest sense, the church is composed of people who are called out of this evil world by God the Father (Jn.6:44; 65) to believe what Jesus taught and submit to his rule in their lives (Jn.14:15-24).

The church Jesus established on the Festival of Pentecost after his death and resurrection was conceived and brought forth through the power of the Father's holy spirit which Jesus sent to dwell within repentant believers. The apostle Paul said the following about the spiritual quality of the church that Jesus established:

"By one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" (1.Cor.12:13-14 KJV). And "Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1.Cor.12:27).

Today, most professing Christians believe that God's church is composed of many different organizations with all the trappings of huge corporate structures, businesses, and governments. However, the church that Jesus rules over is not a corporate organization; the church he rules over is a spiritual organism, which consists of people whom the Father has called out of this world and made a part of his royal family and holy nation of ambassadors, kings, and priests. See 1.Cor.1:1-31; Rev.1:5-6.
Some people contend that any group that meets in the name of Jesus is a Christian group. It is true that Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18: 20 KJV). However, this only applies to people who are truly the Father's elect children, because they are the only ones who have the authority to meet in Jesus’ name.

Many people think that, just because they are members of an organization called a Christian church and believe in God, they are Christians and are worshiping God correctly. This is a very dangerous assumption to make, especially when our eternal life depends on the way we worship and obey God. The true church is a spiritual organism, Jesus Christ is its head, and its body is composed of those called by the Father to salvation, despite their organizational or congregational affiliation or lack thereof.

THE FIRST CHURCH AGE

It is clear from secular records and the Book of Acts that, shortly after the early church was established on the Day of Pentecost in 30 A.D., the apostles established a council of apostles and elders at Jerusalem under the presidency of James. This council exercised authority, responsibility, accountability, and jurisdiction over all the Father's elect children.

After the martyrdom of James (Jesus' brother) and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., secular history shows that the true Christians were in Pella with Simeon as president of their governing body. According to Hegesippus, the blood relatives of Christ continued in the presidency of the Nazorean council until the time of Tarjan Caesar. Although there are historical references about true Christians after this time, with the death of the apostle John, the Father's royal family and holy nation of ambassadors, kings, and priests began to disappear as an organized entity under a centralized leadership.

Clearly, the church that Jesus Christ established through the apostles does not exist in its original form today. But, what caused the early church to cease to exist as a powerful entity? The answer to this question is the foundation on which to build an understanding of the conditions that exist within the Christian Community today and the prophecies about the third church age that will exist just before Christ returns.

The Great Commission

The assignment that Jesus gave to his followers to proclaim the gospel is often called the Great Commission because it should be a priority in the life of every true follower of Christ:

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 19-20 KJV).
Although the primary responsibility for preaching the gospel fell to
the apostles and those specifically chosen and sent to evangelize, the
responsibility was not theirs alone; it was to be shared by all of the elect.
All who believe the gospel message and have accepted its terms and
conditions for salvation must participate in the preaching of the gospel.

At the conclusion of Mark's Gospel, he says, "And they went forth,
and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming
the word with signs following" (Mk.16:20 KJV).

After the Festival of Pentecost in 30 A.D., God's elect did go forth
evangelizing and spreading God the Father's good news message of
salvation and the coming Kingdom of God. Their spiritual zeal changed
the course of history. However, it was not in the plan of God to save the
world during Jesus' lifetime or during the apostolic church age. If this
had been his plan, he would have done it. See Isa.6:8-10; Matt.10:34-36;
13:10-15; Mk.4:11-12; Lk.8:9-10.

Authorizations of Power

Few people realize the awesome power that Jesus placed at the
disposal of the early church as a unified body and the discretion with
which they were authorized to use this power. There are at least 21
distinct authorizations of spiritual and physical gifts noted in the New
Testament that were given to the organized and unified Body of Christ.
Each of these authorizations was to be used to build the early church into
a powerful and dynamic force:

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for
the edifying of the Body" (Eph.4:12 KJV). See also 1.Cor.12:8-10,
28-30; Rom.12:3-8.

There are many accounts of the elect using their powerful authoriza-
tions to perform the commission that Jesus gave to the early church (see
miraculous works at their own discretion. However, as dynamic and
powerful as these people were, they ceased to exist as a powerful,
dynamic and unified entity.

The Seduction of the Apostolic Church

Although Jesus foretold that the elect would be persecuted for their
adherence to God's truth (Jn.15:20; 17:14-17; Acts 8:1; 2.Tim.3:12) and
for teaching his ways, this is not the primary reason that the early church
disappeared as a powerful, unified, and spirit-filled entity. Jesus warned
that the demise of the early church would be caused by its being seduced
into disobedience to God through false teachings. He also warned that
most of those whom the Father would call to salvation would be
deceived by a counterfeit of the Father's worship system:

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my
name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt.24:4-5
KJV).
"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt.24:11-12 KJV).

Continual Warnings

The elect of the early church were continually warned and encouraged to keep "the Faith Once Delivered" and to be on guard against those who wanted to destroy them.

Peter also warned that many would be misled by people who would come to the elect and bring heretical teachings:

"And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of " (2.Pet.2:2 KJV).

Jude encouraged the Father's elect of his day to diligently seek and hold onto "the Faith Once Delivered", because there were evil men among the elect who were actively seeking to destroy them:

"Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, . . .. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit" (Jude 3-4;19 KJV).

Confusion and Division

The apostle Paul urged the elect at Corinth to avoid confusion and division:

"Now I [Paul] beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been told of you, my brethren, by them who are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that every one of you says I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1.Cor.1:10-12 Para.).

The apostle Paul asked the Corinthians, "Is Christ divided?" (1.Cor. 1:13).

The church Jesus Christ established should not be divided over doctrinal issues or any other thing important to salvation or to doing a personal and collective work for the Father.

It is absurd to think that Jesus Christ is not quite sure what his Father's elect children should believe about truth or how they should function as a united body under his direction as the head of his Father's royal family and holy nation on earth. And it is just as absurd to believe that Jesus and his Father do not care how those called to salvation worship and serve them. The reality is that they do care and they will eventually punish
those who refuse to hear what the spirit says to the churches about following false doctrine. See Revelation, chapters two and three and Ex.20:5; Deut.5:29; 12:29-32; 13:1-4; 30:15-16.

God is not of confusion and disorder (1.Cor.14:33); he is an orderly being. Look at the order of all that exists. From the balance of the galactic systems down to the smallest atomic structure, all of the physical creation shows great order; it is not in confusion. Because God created the physical existence to function in an orderly manner, it makes sense that he would have his people worship him in an orderly, structured way, not in many different ways. See Eph.4:4-6; 1:22-23; 1.Cor.12:12-13.

A short review of the Creator God's instructions to Moses and the priesthood concerning the construction of the tabernacle, the sacrificial system, and the conduct of the priesthood, and the warnings of dire consequences for failure to comply in every detail to these instructions clearly shows that God requires his people to worship him in the manner he chooses, not in the manner they choose.

A Departure From The Faith

Paul said to the Galatians, "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel: Which is not another; but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal.1:6-7 KJV). See also 2.Cor.11:13-15.

Paul warned Timothy, "Now the spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1.Tim.4:1-2 KJV).

"For the time will come when they [the elect] will not accept sound teaching . . .. And they shall not pay attention to the truth, and shall turn it away, and shall be turned instead to fables" (2.Tim.4:3-4 Para.).

Many who fellowshipped in the congregations of the early church would not accept sound teachings. They sought out teachers who would teach things that were pleasing to them and things that did not require their obedience to God's laws, precepts, and principles. To deceive the gullible and the spiritually lazy, these teachers replaced truth with error and taught mysticism and other philosophies that appeal to human nature.

THE PROPHECY OF ZECHARIAH

The answers to the perplexing questions concerning the demise and disappearance of the early church are only answered in part by the warnings of Jesus and the apostles. Additional answers are found hidden in the prophecy of Zechariah. Matthew, Mark, and John all record Jesus quoting the first part of Zechariah's prophecy, that foretold the scattering of Jesus' disciples after his death:
"All you shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered abroad" (Matt.26:31 KJV). See also Mk.14:27; Jn.16:32.

This is an extremely important prophecy because the rest of the prophecy, which Jesus did not quote, allows us to understand why the apostolic church ceased to exist as a powerful entity:

"I will turn my hand upon [against] the little ones [the Father's elect children]" (Zech.13:7 KJV).

The little ones mentioned here are the Father's elect, which is noted in many scriptures (see Matt.8:12; 18:3-10; 19:13-14; Mk.9:42). But, why would the Lord of hosts turn against the 'little ones'? And why did Jesus omit this prophecy?

The reason for the rejection of the 'little' ones is that they would reject the "Faith Once Delivered" and cease to be zealous for truth. The reason that Jesus did not quote the rest of Zechariah's prophecy, is because it was a different prophecy, which was to be fulfilled at a different time. The second part of Zechariah's prophecy began its fulfillment during the apostolic church age and will continue to be fulfilled until shortly before Christ's return.

The Early Church Became Corrupted

The early church failed to hold onto the "Faith Once Delivered" and became corrupted with false and misleading teachings about God, his ways, and his plan for humanity. Because of the persistent corruption of God's truth, the once dynamic and powerful entity that Jesus established on the Feast of Pentecost in 30 A.D. began to collapse from within.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and following the death of the apostle John, the organized preaching of the gospel on a powerful basis ceased. The elect were persecuted and their numbers were greatly reduced by the Romans. They became scattered and eventually disappeared into obscurity. Centuries of intense persecution forced the church to go underground. Until the 19th century, the only remaining records of the early church were those of their enemies. A careful study of prophecies concerning God's true body of believers clearly shows that the church Jesus built will remain small and obscure until just before Christ returns at the end of this age of human rule.

THE SECOND CHURCH AGE

"I will build my church and the gates of hell [hades: the grave] will not prevail against it" (Matt.16:18 Para.). See also Matt.28:19-20.
This scripture is often used to prove that the church that Jesus established still exists today with an unbroken succession of spiritual leaders. However, this is not what Jesus said; he did not promise an unbroken succession of spiritual leadership or that the church would endure throughout the ensuing centuries as a unified organization with great spiritual power and prominence until his return. Jesus only assured his disciples that the spiritual entity he would build for the Father would never be destroyed or cease to exist; it would endure the test of time.

Jesus has kept his promise; the Father's royal family and holy nation (i.e., the church), which he rules, does exist. It has continued to exist throughout the centuries alongside a growing counterfeit of biblical Christianity. Though small in numbers, the elect of God have existed in relative obscurity without losing the understanding of the most basic truths that are necessary for salvation.

Today

Today, the church Jesus began in 30 A.D. now consists of the Father's elect children who are scattered throughout the world with some who associate together in organizational and congregational associations and some who are without formal association with their spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ.

In order to clearly understand the condition of the true church today, one must carefully read Jesus' prophecy recorded in Revelation, chapters two and three concerning the spiritual attitudes and behaviors of the Father's elect children who comprise the second and third church ages. This prophecy shows that most of the organizational and congregational associations of the Father's elect children are separated by major doctrinal differences, differing philosophies and concepts about how to worship the Father, as well as incompatible attitudes and behaviors.

The prophecies concerning the various churches in Revelation, chapters two and three also clearly show that there are seven distinct groupings of individuals which characterize the Father's collective royal family and holy nation during the second and third church ages.

The condition that exists within most of the Father's royal family and holy nation today is the result of centuries of passive existence without great spiritual power or numbers, centuries without a unified centralized body of dynamic spirit-filled leaders, and centuries of having only the most basic of spiritual truths to sustain spiritual growth. Although this is the current situation, all who truly have the Father's spirit of adoption do exist as a spiritual organism, which is the collective Body of Christ (the church).

According to prophecies about the end of the age of human rule, this condition will continue to exist among the elect until Christ begins to awaken them either to do a great work for him or to punish them for their rebellion in the hope that they will repent and obtain salvation.
THE THIRD CHURCH AGE

The prophetic scriptures record the advent of three Elijahs. The first was a prophet to ancient Israel, the second was John the Baptist who prepared the way for the Messiah's first appearance, and the third Elijah will appear just before and during the last and third church age. The prophecies about this last Elijah show that Jesus will send him to prepare for his return to rule the earth, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons and the sons to the fathers, and to restore all things:

"Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me . . ." (Mal.3:1 KJV).

"Behold I am sending you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction" (Mal.4:5-6 Para.).

"And Jesus replied, Elijah truly will come first and restore all things" (Matt.17:11 Para.).

Jesus' reference to the restoration of all things is a reference to the restoration of God's worship system which includes the sacrifices, the priesthood, Jesus' teachings concerning the salvation of humanity, and the spiritual relationship between God the Father and his elect children.

The message of the third Elijah is focused on the restoration of God's truth. Therefore, we should expect the third Elijah to restore an understanding of how the worship system the Creator God instituted at Mount Sinai and the worship system Jesus Christ instituted work together for the salvation of those people who will believe and worship God the Father in truth.

This restoration is necessary, because most of these truths were lost to the world as God's worship system became perverted by ancient Israel and Judaism, and during the demise of the early church and the rise of a counterfeit Christianity.

The prophecies about the appearance of the third Elijah, the messages to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation, and the prophecies surrounding the Two Witnesses and their associates mentioned in the Books of Revelation, Haggai, and Zechariah clearly show that Jesus Christ will make an effort to awaken his Father's elect children out of their spiritual sleep and remind them of their responsibilities.

Christ's End-time Work

Although Jesus Christ has been protecting, nurturing, and guiding the members of his Father's royal family and holy nation since he established it in 30 A.D., during the end of the age just before his return, he will begin an awesome work on earth of such great magnitude that it will be beyond the comprehension of unconverted people in this world:
"Behold you among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, you will not believe, though it were told" (Hab.1:5 Para.). See also verses 1-4.

While teaching in the synagogue at Antioch, the apostle Paul repeated the warning of Habbakkuk to show the Jews the consequences of disregarding the good news message that he was bringing them:

"Beware, lest that comes upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I will work a work in your days, a work which you in no way will believe, though you are told about it" (Acts 13:40-41 Para.).

Although the prophet Habbakkuk speaks of Jesus Christ doing an awesome work just before his return, many elect will also participate in his great work as members of the third age of the church.

**Greater Works**

"Truly, truly, I tell you, he that believes on me, the works that I do he shall also do, and greater works, than these he shall do; because I go to the Father. And whatsoever you will ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the son. If you will ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (Jn.14:12-14 Para.).

As powerful as the apostolic church age was in the performance of their responsibility to proclaim the Father's message, they did not do a greater work than Jesus. However, some of God's elect who will live just before Christ's return will do this greater work. They will do a greater work because they will have the kind of faith, power, and protection necessary to do a greater work (Dan.11:31-35; Jn.14:12-14; Rev.11:1-6).

**The Awakening**

The prophecies about the end of the age show that, just before his return, Jesus will again establish a dynamic, powerful people to proclaim his Father's good news and the coming Kingdom of God.

During this age, many of the Father's elect children will become unified in belief and filled with dynamic spiritual and physical power. Many will manifest the authorizations of the early church and more which is noted by the prophecies about the Two Witnesses, the third Elijah, and Daniel (Dan.11:31-34).

It is likely that some of the people whom Jesus will use in a dynamic way in the end of the age will come out of six of the seven church groupings noted in the Book Revelation, chapters two and three. These will be awakened out of their spiritual lethargy and begin performing the functions and responsibilities that they were originally called to do. During this time, many of the elect will have the ability to defy the very laws of the physical universe with their miracle working power. Moreover, no physical or spiritual power will be able to stop them from doing their God-given task.
The Promise To Philadelphia

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things say he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shutts; and shuts, and no man opens" (Rev.3:7).

The individual in this prophecy who has the key of David has absolute authority over its use and the door which it opens as does the prophetic Eliakim noted in Isaiah 22:15-25.

Revelation, chapter 3, verse 8, seems to show that the Church of Philadelphia represents a grouping of the Sovereign Father's earthly children who are to do a great work in the end of the age, and that it is Christ who has the key to open to them the knowledge and power they will need to do this great work.

Speaking to the Church of Philadelphia in verse 8, Christ says:

"I know your works: behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name" (Rev.3:8).

The English word translated as man in verse 8 is translated from the Greek word oudeis, which does not mean a man (Greek: anthropos; which means man-faced, i.e., a human being. Oudeis means none nobody, or nothing.

The English word strength in verse 8 is translated from the Greek word dunamis, which means force (literally or figuratively); specifically, it means, miraculous power (usually by implication, a miracle itself).

Christ specifically says that, at the time the open door is set before them, the Church of Philadelphia has little force (i.e., miraculous power). Historically, this has been the condition of the entire collective church since the demise and disappearance of the early church as a powerful unified entity.

The inference in verse 8 is that, because of their small amount of spiritual power, the Church of Philadelphia cannot open this door on their own. However, when this door is opened for them, absolutely nothing can shut it except Christ.

Who Are the Philadelphians?

All of the various organizations and congregational associations throughout the world that overtly teach foundational elements required for salvation, including the observance of the Sabbath and the annual festivals and holy convocations, believe they are a part of the Philadelphia church mentioned in the Book of Revelation, chapter 3. Moreover, most professing Christians who know of the prophetic Philadelphians also think of themselves as having these attributes. However, most are self-deceived and have not examined what is required to be accepted by
God as a Philadelphian worthy of special consideration, empowerment, and protection.

For most people, the discovery of the identity of the Philadelphia church will come too late to forestall receiving some of God's wrath during the great tribulation at the end of the age. Clearly, the vast majority of professing Christians today do not have the characteristics that the Father and Jesus Christ require of a spiritual Philadelphian.

DIFFERENT CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

Today, there are tens of thousands of church organizations and congregational associations who call themselves Christians, but do not faintly resemble the early church. The majority of these professing Christians are in direct competition with each other, teaching many different confusing and contradictory philosophies about Christ and the Bible.

To understand why there are so many different Christian denominations today and how this situation came into existence, we must answer the following questions:

• If Christ is not divided, as the apostle Paul said, why are so many Christian organizations and associations in direct competition with each other?
• Why do the various Christian organizations and associations teach so many different confusing and contradictory philosophies about Christ, the Bible, and how to worship God?
• Why do the tens of thousands of Christian organizations and associations call themselves Christians when they do not even faintly resemble the early church?

Rebellion Against God

The first reason so many different professing Christian denominations exist, is rebellion against God. Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden. The children of Israel rebelled against the Creator in the wilderness after he had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Mankind has been rebelling against God from Adam until now. See Ezk.20:1-17; Isa.30:9-10; 66:3.

Jesus said, "I will build my church" and he did build it; however, Jesus did not build or sanction the tens of thousands of different competing denominations that claim to follow him. Jesus inspired the apostle Paul to write the following:

"There is one body, and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one Faith, one baptism, One God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph.4:4-6).
For some reason people seem to think they can worship God any way they want. Notice that Jesus called the religious leaders of his day hypocrites, because they were teaching their own philosophies and traditions in place of God's truth:

"You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draws near to me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But IN VAIN they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt.15: 7-9).

Because some of God's elect children fall into this category of rebellion. Paul warned the young evangelist Timothy:

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables" (2.Tim.4:2-4 KJV).

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

Rebellion can come in many forms and always separates the rebellious people from God the Father and Jesus Christ, no matter what organization or congregational association people align themselves with.

**Satan's Deception**

The second reason for so many different Christian denominations is Satan's deception. In the early days of the church, Satan started his master deception and tried to destroy the true church from within. The apostle Paul warned the church at Corinth about this deception:

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2.Cor.11:13-15).

Yes, Satan has ministers and even churches designed to counterfeit God's true church (Rev.2:9; 3:9). Moreover, there are many pseudo-Christian ministers who truly think they are serving the true God but are themselves deceived into serving as a minister of Satan.

The reality is that the vast majority of professing Christians today are deceived into thinking they are worshiping the true God because of Satan's deception:
"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev.12:9 KJV).

Jesus knew this would happen and warned, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying I am the Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt.24:4-5 KJV).

Jesus foretold the time when Satan's ministers would preach another gospel in his name, and many would be deceived into thinking they were following him. See Matt.24:11; Gal.1:6-9.

Jesus' prophecy has come true. Most professing Christians today believe and preach a false gospel, not because they have predetermined to do so, but because Satan has deceived them. Satan is indeed the master deceiver. Moreover, deceived people do not know they are deceived; otherwise, they would not be deceived.

It is obvious that the early Church was not divided into many different denominations. It is also obvious that, if all professing Christians submitted to God's rule in their lives, denominations would disappear.

Contrary to what most believe, Jesus Christ does not sanction the many different competing church organizations and congregational associations that exist today. Jesus said, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt.16:18 KJV). He did not say he would build many different competing churches; he said that he would build his church and it would endure.

After being crucified and resurrected from the dead, Jesus instructed his disciples on how he wanted his church to be constructed:

"Therefore, you go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matt.28:19-20 KJV Para.).

Jesus told his disciples to teach the things that he had commanded. Christ was not only referring to the things he had taught during his earthly ministry in human form but also the things he had taught Israel when he was their God before he became a human being.

ABOUT THE CHURCH

Let us look at what the Bible says about the people who are the church. The first thing we find about its members is that they are not very popular. In fact, they are usually hated by most people. Jesus knew this would be the case and asked God the Father to protect them:
"I have given them your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but you should keep them from evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth" (Jn.17:14-17 KJV).

Why are God's people hated by the world? The answer is really quite simple when we understand that the human mind and nature is enmity against God, his truth, and way of truth (Rom.8:7), and that God's enemy, Satan, has deceived the whole world into following him (Rev.12:9) and influenced the world to hate the things of the true God and his people.

THE CHURCH—PERSECUTED, SCATTERED, AND SMALL

Jesus understood human nature as no other man could. As the Creator God of all things including humanity (Jn.1:1-3; Eph.3:9), he had observed human behavior throughout their history and knew that people would continue to oppose truth as long as they were influenced by their own nature and Satan. From its very beginning, the people of the early church suffered much persecution because of what they believed, practiced, and taught:

"And Saul [Paul] consented to Stephen's death. And at that time there was great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles" (Acts 8:1 KJV).

God's way of life is opposite to the way most people want to live. Most people do not like to be told how to live or that their behavior is sinful and they usually dislike people who point out their faults. The Bible is full of examples of the righteous being hated, despised, maligned, persecuted, and murdered for believing, practicing, and proclaiming truth. It is no different today. The Father's elect children will be hated and persecuted for believing, practicing, and proclaiming his truth until his kingdom rules the earth.

Although Christianity as a world religion encompasses hundreds of millions of people, it is evident from the scriptures that those who truly comprise the spiritual organism which is the Father's royal family and holy nation is a very small number of people. But, does being small in number make a group of people the true church? Of course not! There are many small groups that say they are Christian, but are so far out of line with what Jesus taught that they do not even begin to resemble true Christianity.
Hated by Popular Christianity

There are tens of thousands of different competing groups and organizations that profess to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. All of these feel that their particular interpretation of Jesus' teachings and the Bible is acceptable to God.

Those who truly follow the teachings of God the Father and Jesus Christ teach that there is only one way to worship the true God and only one way to obtain salvation, and that those who teach another way of worship and salvation are worshiping a false god.

The vast majority of counterfeit Christians hate the Father's true children because their belief, practices, and teachings are a condemnation of counterfeit Christianity. Just as the Jews of Jesus' day professed to believe in God and hated Jesus for what he taught, so it is in this age. God's people will be hated for believing and teaching the truth as Jesus taught it (Jn.17:14).

Hated by Judaism

Those of the various Jewish sects, for the most part, believe that Jesus Christ existed, but very few believe he was the Creator God, the Son of God, and the Messiah. However, a major part of the gospel message teaches that Jesus Christ is the Creator God and the Son of God, and that God the Father sent Jesus to cancel the first covenant with national Israel and replace it with a new one.

Both the record of God's law and the words of Jesus condemn Judaism as a perversion of the original writings of the word of God. Therefore, it is no wonder that those of the various Jewish sects feel that any who believe in and follow the teachings of Jesus are their enemies and worshipers of a pagan god.

Christianity and Judaism

Quasi-Christians and people of Jewish sects who profess to worship the true God but whose lives and teachings are not harmonious with the truth of God always have a great deal of disdain and hatred for those who actually worship God in truth, love, and obedience. Jesus says these individuals who hate his followers are evil and corrupt:

"Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying. This people draws near to me with their mouth, and with their lips honor me; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the ordinances of men" (Matt.15:7-9 Para.). See Isa.29:13; Ezk.33:31-32.

"For the tree is known by its fruit. O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? for out of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matt.12:33-35 Para.). See Matt.3:7.
Jesus called the religious leaders of the Jews "hypocrites, snakes, evil and corrupt men," because they were not teaching the total truth of God. Instead, they were teaching half-truths and their own perverted philosophy that were in opposition to God's word. The same can be said for the quasi-Christian and Jewish sects of today. Both claim to be obedient to the word of God; however, their actions and the results of their teachings are far different from what the Bible says they should be if they were truly worshiping the true God and living according to his way.

"But I say to you, That every idle word that men speak, they shall give account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you are justified, and by your words you are condemned" (Matt.12: 36-37 Para.).

The words of those who only pretend to worship the true God condemn them for what they really are. People can fool other people as to their true beliefs and intentions, but they cannot fool God. Hence, Jesus gave his condemnation of the religious leaders of his day who were, in reality, only pretending to worship the true God:

"Why come to me and call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" (Lk.6:46 Para.) See Lk.6:43-45.

The elect of God must speak out as Jesus did and condemn those who falsely claim to worship the true God. This is yet another reason that the elect of God will be hated and persecuted.

**Hated by all Religions**

Those who truly believe that the biblical record is the printed word of God should also believe the biblical teaching that there are only two religions in the world. The religion of God the Father who is Sovereign of all that exists and the religion of his enemies that are separated into three basic categories: Quasi-Christianity, Judaism, and all other religions.

Because of this belief, it is little wonder that those who truly believe that they are the only true worshipers of the only true God and his Son will be hated by all religions of the world today. It is interesting that this is the same basic reason that the ancient nation of Israel was hated and persecuted by other nations.

**Hated by Governments**

Jesus was not persecuted by the Roman government; he was persecuted by those who said they were worshiping the one true God. After Jesus' death and resurrection, the early church existed for many years without being persecuted by the Roman or any other government.
During the time of the apostles and the early church, persecution always came from the Jews or other religions. It was only after the Romans and other governments perceived the followers of God as a political threat that they began to persecute them.

During the time of the end, the elect of God will claim to be the only ones worshipping the true God and the only true representatives of the Government of God on earth, like Jesus and the early church did. The elect will believe and preach that the government of God is about to begin its rule over all the earth, which will cause them to be hated by governments as well as by people of other religions.

"And you shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Matt.24:9).

**Hated by all Israel**

The nations of Israel have always been rebellious people who have seldom heeded the warnings of God's prophets and servants. As the end of this age approaches and the elect of God proclaim the gospel along with its warning and witness to the Israelites scattered throughout the world, the Israelites will respond to God in the same way that they always have in the past.

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to record the harsh reality concerning the attitudes and mind-set of the people of Israel toward God. The comments God made about his chosen people are as true today as they were when Isaiah recorded them centuries ago:

**Isaiah 30:1-15 LPB**

"Woe to my rebellious children, says the Lord; you ask advice from everyone but me, and decide to do what I don't want you to do. You yoke yourselves with unbelievers, thus piling up your sins. . . Now go and write down this word of mine concerning Egypt [symbolic of sin as well as a literal nation], so that it will stand until the end of time, forever and forever, as an indictment of Israel's unbelief. For if you don't write it, they will claim I never warned them. "Oh, no," they will say, "you never told us that!" For they are stubborn rebels. They tell my prophets, "Shut up—we don't want any more of your reports!" Or they say, "Don't tell us the truth; tell us nice things; tell us lies. Forget all this gloom; we've heard more than enough about your 'Holy One of Israel' and all he says" (vs.1-11).

It should not come as a great surprise that all of the politicians, military leaders, and government officials at every level of the Israelitish nations scattered around the world will hate the elect of God, because the elect of God will be preaching the same message of repentance that God's prophets have always preached to Israel.
"This is the reply of the Holy One of Israel: "Because you despise what I tell you and trust instead in frauds and lies and won't repent, therefore calamity will come upon you suddenly, as upon a bulging wall that bursts and falls; in one moment it comes crashing down. God will smash you like a broken dish; he will not act sparingly. Not a piece will be left large enough to use for carrying coals from the hearth, or a little water from the well." For the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, says: "Only in returning to me and waiting for me will you be saved; in quietness and confidence is your strength"; but you'll have none of this" (vs.12-15).

Another reason for the Israelitish people's hatred and persecution of the elect of God in the end of the age is that the elect of God also teach that God the Father is now punishing the descendants of Israel throughout the world for their continued rebellion against him and his physical and spiritual laws of behavior. The elect also believe that God will give them the power to bring destruction upon the Israelitish people as a witness and warning of more destruction to come if they and the world at large will not repent of their evil ways and peacefully come under his rule. See Isa.29:9-14.

PERSECUTION

Why was Jesus Christ crucified for preaching the gospel message? Why were most of the apostles along with many of the early church martyred? And why will many be murdered just before the return of Jesus Christ for preaching the truly astounding message that Jesus taught?

Jesus Gives the Answer

"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (Jn.15:20 Para.). "And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2.Tim.3:12 Para.). See also Mk.13:13; Lk.21:17.

The persecution of the elect of God is a self-fulfilling prophecy, because of their obedience to the command of Jesus to proclaim the gospel message. The elect of God will be hated and persecuted because they will be doing as Jesus instructed. They will be preaching and teaching the good news message of repentance from evil, true belief in God the Father and Jesus Christ, and the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

The gospel message that Jesus brought from the Father is a message that is so dynamic, so powerful, and so diametrically opposed to what has been taught by this world's religious leaders and philosophers that the vast majority of people will reject it when they hear it and hate and persecute those who live it and teach it.

Jesus says to let one's light shine (Matt.5:14-16). When one does this, one cannot help but bring persecution upon oneself.
Today, just before the return of Jesus Christ to conquer the earth and establish his Father's religion and government over the earth, the true servants of God must proclaim God the Father's good news just as Christ did centuries ago.

The basic reasons for the persecution of the elect are not complex or difficult to understand. Revealing the true condition of the world and laying the blame at the feet of those who are responsible for these horrible conditions will indeed bring persecution.

**HOW TO FIND THOSE WHO TRULY FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST**

In this world of confusing Christian denominations, how does a person go about finding the Father's elect children who truly serve him and his Son Jesus Christ? How does one find a group of true Christians? It should be obvious that Jesus is not the founder of the tens of thousands of competing Christian organizations and congregational associations, so how can a person find people who truly serve the Sovereign God and his Son?

Are there identifying marks, signs, or something that one can observe that will help one to recognize true Christians? The answer is yes! True Christians can be identified and separated from those who are not. The following are some major points to look for when determining if someone is being guided by Jesus Christ and the Father's holy spirit:

- Obedience to God's laws
- Brotherly love
- Observance of God's seventh-day Sabbath
- Observance of God's commanded observances and festivals
- Non-participation in pagan worship systems
- Distinctly separate from other religions
- Preaching of the Kingdom of God
- Understanding of the purpose of the church
- Understanding of God's plan of salvation for humanity

**God's People Obey His Laws**

God's people obey his laws, precepts, and principles. His people recognize that he has set in motion laws which will bring every good thing, abundant well-being, and a full, happy, and productive life if they are obeyed. God's people will boldly proclaim that his laws, precepts, and principles are not done away with, but have been expanded to cover every aspect of human activity (Isa.42:21; Matt.5:17-18). God's people say with King David, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (Psa.119:105) and they recognize that God's law is one of his greatest gifts to humanity.
The apostle John has a stinging rebuke for those who say they know God and do not keep his law:

"He that says, I know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1.Jn.2:4).

God's people recognize that a requirement for maintaining a harmonious relationship with the Father and Jesus Christ is commandment keeping. Moreover, God's people show their love for God and their concern for each other through keeping the Father's law:

Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (Jn.14:15).

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous" (1.Jn.5:2-3).

Brotherly Love

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if we have love one to another" (Jn.13:35).

Although love for those within the body of Christ may not seem to be a major sign of God's people, it is nonetheless. In a world torn with strife, war, divorce, murder, anger, hatred and violence, true love and concern for another person is rare indeed, and it is truly a sign of the people who follow the one who loved the world enough to give his life for it.

The Seventh-Day Sabbath, Commanded Observances, and Holy Convocations

God's people observe his seventh-day Sabbath, his commanded observances, and his holy convocations:

"Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever does any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death" (Ex.31:15).

"Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctifies them" (Ezk.20:12). "And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God" (Ezk.20:20).

Other observances and holy convocations that God's people keep are the New Moons, the Passover, and the Annual Festivals. These are statutes to be kept forever and are signs of God's people. See Ex.13:9; Lev. chap 23; Isa.56:1-6; 58:13; 66:22-23.
God's People and Paganism

God's people do not observe pagan festivals and holidays (e.g., Christmas, Easter, and Halloween) or rituals and traditions appropriated from this world's religions. Although many professing Christians will say there is nothing wrong with observing and practicing other religions festivals, holidays, rituals and traditions, they do admit they are pagan in origin. The prophet Jeremiah gave this warning from God concerning Satanic practices:

"Do not learn the ways of other nations, and don't be terrified at the signs of heaven as other nations are. For the customs of these people are vanity; for one cuts a tree out of the forest, with an ax it is the work of the hands of the craftsman. They adorn it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, so they don't move." (Jer.10:2-4 Para). Also see Deut.12:29-31.

"Don't go after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and don't provoke me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you" (Jer.25:6 Para).

Paul warns God's people at Corinth not to bind themselves with other people who are unbelievers and practice Satan's worship systems:

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" (2.Cor.6:14-16).

Separate from Other Religions

The apostle Paul instructed the elect at Corinth to avoid mixing paganism with Christianity (2.Cor.6:14-16). He also told them to separate themselves from the religions of that day:

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you" (2.Cor.6:17).

God's people must remain separate from this world's religions, because participation in them leads to spiritual adultery. The true church will be the Bride of Christ, and its people today are representatives of the Father's holy nation as its citizens, ambassadors, kings, and priests (2.Cor.5:20).

The Kingdom of God

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel" (Mk.1:14-15 KJV). See also Matt.24:14; 28:19-20.
God's people proclaim the coming Kingdom of God as the solution to humanity's problems, as well as the other good news messages that Jesus Christ and the apostles taught concerning the Father's plan for the salvation of humanity and entrance into his family and kingdom as a spirit-being.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal.1:8-9).

These are strong words; but they do show just how important it is to the Father that his people proclaim the right message. The gospel that Jesus proclaimed is a far cry from the teachings of popular Christianity today. The true good news messages are so dynamic, so powerful, so diametrically opposite to what is taught in most churches around the world today that most people reject it:

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables" (2.Tim.4:2-4 KJV).

The Purpose of the Church

The early church was not established to become a large and powerful organization in order to challenge Satan for world rule and make this world a better place in which to live under its present leadership. Instead, Jesus established the early church for the following four basic reasons:

1. Prepare a people to help Jesus Christ rule the world

"And has [i.e., Christ has] made us to our God [i.e., God the Father] kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev.5:10). See also 1.Thes.3:13; Rev.3:21; 20:4-6.

2. Proclaim the good news of the soon-coming government of God

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt.24:14).

3. Teach God the Father's message of repentance and salvation

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt.28:19-20).
"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit" (Acts 2:38).

4. Provide a place for those whom the Father calls during the gospel age of salvation (Jn.6:44) to grow in grace and knowledge (2.Pet.3:18) and to learn and perfect godly ways in their lives so they will be able to fulfill the purpose for which they were called (Rev.5:10).

**God's People Understand the Plan of Salvation**

God the Father has a plan by which humans can be born into his spiritual family. This plan involves repentance, the forgiveness of sin, water baptism, and full redemption and salvation. Only people whom the Father adopts into his royal family and holy nation during the gospel age of salvation truly understand his plan for the salvation for humanity. See Mk.4:10-12; 1.Cor.2:1-8.

The apostle John wrote, "Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1.Jn.3:2). See also Rom.6:1-5; Phil.3:21; Rev.21:6-7.

**SUMMARY**

There are only two religions on earth: 1) The Sovereign God's worship system which is administered by his Son Jesus Christ and leads people who practice it to eternal life; 2) Satan's counterfeits of the Sovereign's worship system which leads people to the irrevocable termination of their life in the Lake of Fire. Therefore, the two following questions and their answers are extremely important to anyone whom God the Father is calling to salvation during this age:

- Does it really matter what one believes about God and the Bible?
- Does it really matter which Christian organization or congregational association one attends?

If there is no God, and the Bible is not his word, it does not matter what a person believes about God and the Bible or with whom one associates to worship God. If there is no Sovereign God to whom one is accountable, why waste one's time and effort with religion? The problem with believing that there is no God is the fact that there is abundant proof that God the Father and Jesus Christ do exist and that the Bible is their word and instruction manual to the human race.

If one is truly seeking to be in harmony with the Sovereign of all that exists and wants to be given eternal life by him, one should be extremely concerned that one's life measures up to his expectations.
God's True Church Does Exist

The Sovereign God's worship system and the spiritual organism (his adopted sons—the church) which his Son rules has existed from the day he established it through his Son and his holy spirit in 30 A.D.. His body of true believers have endured the test of persecution, martyrdom, and time and this body still exists today as a spiritual organism wherever members of his royal family and holy nation worship and serve him and his Son (Matt.16:18; 18:20).

The true Church of God is a single spiritual organism consisting of people who worship and serve the Father and his Son as instructed by Jesus Christ and the apostles:

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph.4:4-6).

Somewhere on earth there are people who truly worship and serve the Sovereign Father and his Son, either individually or as a collective group. God's church does exist. It is here on this earth right now! It is doing the same work Jesus commissioned it to accomplish, and it has the same spirit, attitude, goals, and objectives as the early apostles and the church that they ruled and served. If a person is going to find the true church, they will have to look outside this world's religions and look into the Bible for its description, doctrines, and policies, because one will not find God's true church among the popular religions of today. The reason is that the true church that Christ built is not a part of this world.

Where is the true Church today?

The true church is a spiritual organism and it is wherever you find an individual or a group of people believing, teaching, and practicing the same worship system that the early church believed in, taught, and practiced.

The prophesied disappearance of the apostolic church happened right on schedule and the events prophesied to occur during the end of this age concerning the Father's children as they witness and warn of the return of Christ will occur.

By B.L. Cochrell
Today, there is much confusion and bewilderment within both the Jewish and Christian religions as to the exact meaning and intent of much of the Bible. Moreover, there are hundreds of opinions on any given topic found within the Bible. This situation makes it extremely difficult for those who are attempting to truly understand God's laws, precepts, and principles to do so. Does a single authority on God and his teachings exist, or are we living in the times spoken of by the prophet Amos in which there is a famine of the word?

"Behold, the days come, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst" (Amos 8:11-13 KJV).

Many professing Christians believe that Amos' prophecy about a famine of hearing God's word is speaking of the time during the great tribulation just prior to Christ's return. However, this assumption does not take into consideration the fact that the Two Witnesses noted in the Book of Revelation will be proclaiming God's truth and a warning message to the world with great power for three and a half years before Christ's return. See Rev.11:3-12.

The English word hearing in Amos, chapter 8 verse 11 is translated from the Hebrew word shama a primitive root, which means to hear intelligently (often with implication of attention and obedience). Understanding that the Hebrew word shama means more than just hearing sounds is the key to understanding the prophecy of Amos. The scriptures clearly show that God's word will continue to be proclaimed during the great tribulation by the Two Witnesses and God's people; therefore, the lack of hearing God's word in the context of this prophecy connotes a barrier that will not allow an understanding of God's word.

Although it is true that the time-frame of Amos' prophecy covers the end of the age, this prophecy also covers many centuries prior to the end of the age. This study explains why God prevents many from understanding his words. This study also explains when Amos' prophecy came into full force and when it will come to an end.
The Disappearance of the Apostolic Church

Shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there was a dynamic evangelizing church spreading God's truth throughout the world. However, as dynamic as this church was, it virtually disappeared from history after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. From 70 to 120 A.D., there was very little recorded about the true church of God. When historians began to write about the church again, they wrote of a dramatically different church from the one that embraced the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles. Today, we find churches that call themselves Christian, yet the vast majority do not even faintly resemble the early church.

Today, Christianity is one of the world's largest religions. There are thousands of Christian organizations and congregational associations that profess Christianity and claim to worship and serve the God of the Bible. Each professes to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ as expounded in the pages of the Bible and each believe that they have a keen understanding of the Bible and God's will for humanity.

In this age, Christian organizations and congregational associations offer a variety of religious experiences. Whatever one's approach to religion, there is a Christian organization or congregational association that can be found in order to fill one's desire for religious expression.

The choices of Christian churches range from one extreme to another: small personal groups, large crowds, quite scholarly and intellectual organizations, noisy, frenzied charismatic churches, giant cathedrals or evangelistic tents. There seems to be no end to the choices a person has when seeking a religious experience.

Most of these Christian organizations and congregational associations are separated by major doctrinal differences about subjects that are extremely important to one's salvation. There are many differing philosophies and concepts about how to worship the God of the Bible, and there is much confusion about what God expects of each person who wants to worship and serve him. These doctrinal differences and certain incompatible attitudes and behaviors between these various Christian organizations and congregational associations should cause anyone who is truly serious about their salvation to seriously question why there are so many different competing Christian churches and philosophies.

It is true that, since the advent of the printing press, the Bible has remained the most published and most read book in the world. The Bible has been translated into almost every language and distributed to billions of people. There is virtually no populated place on this planet where one cannot find a copy of the Bible. However, few people understand this book and practice the laws, precepts, and principles contained within its pages. If this were not true there would only be one church teaching one truth.
The simple fact is that we are living in a time when there is very little true understanding of God's word. Although there is not a famine of God's word on the printed page, there is a famine of understanding the word of God. During this age, hundreds of millions of people hear the Bible taught every day, but with virtually no explanation as to what the Bible text truly says and means.

Conservative, Reform, and Orthodox Judaism and professing Christians claim conservatorship of the biblical text, and each claims that the Creator God has guided and inspired their understanding of the biblical text. The problem is that each of these religions are divided into many factions with each faction having widely differing views, opinions, and interpretations of what the biblical text says.

Although all factions of Judaism believe that some kind of oral law is necessary to make the Torah understandable and workable, many factions reject the belief that most of the Talmud dates back to Moses' time and they seem to see the Talmud and the oral law as an evolving system in which successive generations of rabbis have the authority to alter the application of the written law as necessary to fit current circumstances. But, Orthodox Jews feel less free to ignore, modify, or change the oral law.

On the other hand, the vast majority of professing Christians believe that neither the written law nor the oral law apply to them, so they are free to worship God as they please and live their lives without any biblical constraints or fear of punishment.

A quandary of gigantic proportions faces everyone who truly seeks to understand the Bible in this age, because there seems to be no totally trustworthy human authority from which to gain accurate biblical knowledge. Given the fact that there is much confusion and divergent opinion about the biblical text among the various biblically based religions, the logical conclusion is that we are living in the times of Amos' prophecy—there is a famine of hearing (i.e., understanding) God's word. If this were not true, it would be an easy task to find a trustworthy source of biblical understanding wherein there is no contradiction or divergent opinion as to the meaning of biblical text.

Three Reasons Understanding Is Withheld

The following are three major reasons why few people understand God's words during this age.

Wicked or Wise

The prophet Daniel records one of the reasons that the understanding of God's word is withheld from most people today:
"And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan.12:8-10 KJV).

Much of what is recorded in the Bible is there for the benefit of those who have a need to know certain things, because these things pertain to them and no one else. Therefore, this knowledge is withheld from other people because it will not benefit them. See Matt.13:13-16; Rom.15:4; 1.Cor.15:11.

National Israel

"Make this announcement to Judah and to Israel: "'Listen, O foolish, senseless people—you with the eyes that do not see and the ears that do not listen—have you no respect at all for me?' the Lord God asks. 'How can it be that you don't even tremble in my presence? I set the shorelines of the world by perpetual decrees, so that the oceans, though they toss and roar, can never pass those bounds. Isn't such a God to be feared and worshiped?"'But my people have rebellious hearts; they have turned against me and gone off into idolatry. Though I am the one who gives them rain each year in spring and fall and sends the harvest-times, yet they have no respect or fear for me. And so I have taken away these wondrous blessings from them. This sin has robbed them of all of these good things" (Jer.5:20-25 TLB).

Most of the Patriarch Israel's descendants (including the Jews) worship false gods and have departed from their covenant relationship with God. Therefore, many of the blessings that they were promised for obedience (including an understanding of God's word) has been withheld from them until they repent of their sins.

Jesus and His Parables

Many believe the reason that Jesus spoke in parables was to make his meaning clear; however, this was not what he said. He said that he spoke in parables to conceal information that could lead people to conversion:

"And when he was alone, those around him, with the Twelve, asked him as to the parable. And he said to them, To you has been given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God. But to these outside, all things are being given in parables: that seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; least they should be converted, and their sins be forgiven them" (Mk.4:10-12 Para.). See also Isa.6:8-10; Matt.13:10-15; Lk.8:10; Jn.12:37-40; Acts 28:25-27.
The word *mystery* in verse 11 is translated from the Greek word *mysterion*, which means *mystery* or *secret*. Jesus clearly said that those outside of his group were not permitted to understand the secret plan of God that would lead them to salvation.

The apostle Paul spoke to the Colossians about this same mystery and he told them that it was only revealed to the saints:

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and I fill up in my flesh the things lacking of the afflictions of Christ, on behalf of his body, which is the church; of which I became a minister, according to the administration of God given to me for you to fulfill the word of God, the mystery having been hidden from the ages, and from the generations, but is now revealed to his saints [the elect of God]; to whom God desired to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col.1:24-27 Para.). See Rom.16:25-26; Eph.1:8-9; 1.Tim. 3:9.

**Why the Secrecy?**

But why would this information that leads a person to salvation be kept secret and why is it only revealed to God's elect?

The mystery of salvation has been preached since the time of Adam, but only a very few have been allowed to understand it. God the Father and Jesus Christ love their human creation much more than most people can begin to comprehend. It is this love and concern for each individual that prevents God the Father from offering salvation to all of humanity before the establishment of his kingdom on earth.

God the Father and Jesus Christ want everyone to become a part of the God family; they want everyone to obtain salvation:

"Who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of truth" (1.Tim.2:4 KJV).

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2.Pet.3:9 KJV). See also Psa.136:1-16.

This love and concern is the reason that God the Father and Jesus Christ have formulated a plan that will afford each individual the optimum opportunity for success. The Father knows the potential and character of each individual and in which phase of his plan to offer them the opportunity for salvation. In order for each person to have the best possible conditions for success in obtaining salvation, they must be allowed to live in a time and environment in which they can succeed if they want to. Therefore, a true understanding of God's word is withheld until this time arrives for each individual.
An End to the Prophecy of Amos

Only the restoration of God's laws, precepts, and principles to their original physical and spiritual meaning and intent will bring an end to the prophecy of Amos concerning the famine of the understanding of God's word. The promise to bring an end to Amos' prophecy concerning the lack of understanding of God's word and circumstances surrounding the ending of this prophecy are mentioned many times in the biblical record. The following two prophecies concerning the third Elijah show when Amos' prophecy will begin to end and when God's laws, precepts, and principles will begin to be understood in their entirety:

"Behold I am sending you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction" (Mal.4:5-6 Para.).

"And Jesus replied, Elijah truly will come first and restore all things" (Matt.17:11 Para.).

Within these two prophecies are the keys to understanding the ministry of Elijah during the end of the age and exactly what will be restored. Notice that he will prepare the way before Christ's return, and that he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons and the hearts of the sons to the fathers.

Why do the hearts of the fathers need to be turned to the sons and the hearts of the sons to the fathers, and what is it that needs to be restored? Restoration is only necessary when something has not been maintained in it's original form. God's written law has not changed since it was given to Moses and recorded in the books of the law—God's law does not need to be restored because it is eternal. What has degraded and is in need of restoration is the understanding, teaching, and application of God's laws, precepts, and principles that have either been lost or perverted through the centuries.

The biblical record is replete with God's admonitions for Israel to return to his law and way of life. During the time of Jesus, the understanding, teaching, and application of many of God's original laws, precepts, and principles had been so perverted that they were almost unrecognizable (See Matt.23:16-33). Understanding that the perversion of God's laws, precepts, and principles would continue until his return, Jesus asks if he will find the faith on earth when he returns? See Luke 18:8.
After the death of the apostle John and the disappearance of the early church as an organized entity with a central governing authority, the teachings of Jesus and the apostles concerning God's laws, precepts and principles were perverted to the point that very little is truly understood today about the written law and its physical and spiritual intent and meaning. Therefore, in order for the confusion about what the Sovereign Father and Jesus Christ expect of each individual to be resolved, a true understanding of God's law and his worship system must be restored.

The prophetic reference by Jesus of the restoration of all things surely includes a restoration of God's worship system, which has been perverted since it was given at Mount Sinai many centuries ago. The restoration of God's worship system also includes a restoration of God's law, precepts, and principles that are necessary for a person to live a totally righteous lifestyle. Only the restoration of God's laws, precepts, and principles to their original physical and spiritual meaning and intent will bring an end to Amos' prophecy concerning people's serious lack of understanding God's word.

The message of the third Elijah is centered around the restoration of the truth of God. Therefore, we should expect the third Elijah to restore an understanding of how the worship system that God instituted at Mount Sinai and the worship system that Jesus Christ instituted at Jerusalem work together in the salvation of anyone who will believe and worship God the Father in truth.

When these two aspects of the Father's worship system are restored and understood in the light of his plan for the salvation of humanity, and then believed by those whom he calls to salvation, it can truly be said that the hearts of the fathers are turned to the sons and the hearts of the sons to the fathers. Belief in and adherence to God's true worship system results in a return to a harmonious relationship between the fathers who taught righteousness (i.e., the Patriarchs, Moses, Aaron, the Apostles, and others) and the sons (i.e., those who are taught righteousness and believe).

There is much confusion and bewilderment within both the Jewish and Christian religions as to the exact meaning and intent of much of the Bible, and there are hundreds of opinions on any given topic found within the Bible. If you are attempting to truly understand God's laws, precepts, and principles, where can you find a book, a teacher, or a group of people who truly understand God and his teachings? Are we living in the times spoken of by the Prophet Amos? Yes, we are living in the times of Amos' prophecy of a famine of God's word. However, for those whom the Sovereign Father is calling to salvation, there is no need to remain ignorant. Moreover, you who are being called can eat and drink of God's word if you will seize the moment and come to the table of the Lord.
"Seek you the Lord while he may be found, call you upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa.55: 6-7 KJV).

The fulfillment of prophecy is a major proof that the Sovereign God exists and that he has the power and authority to control the destiny of humanity. Moreover, the fulfillment of Amos' prophecy concerning a famine of the understanding of God's word tells us that God's plan for humanity is right on schedule and we are very close to the return of the Messiah.

By B.L. Cocherell
The opportunity that is presented to those who are called to the first resurrection is almost beyond comprehension. God the Father offers not only eternal life to those he calls to salvation in this age but also immortal life and great rewards and positions of service in his Family and Kingdom.

The quality of life promised by the Father is comparable to that which he has himself. The Father is a spirit-being who inherently possesses the highest form of life: immortality on a divine plane of existence. Immortality is life that springs forth from itself and it is not dependent on any other source to sustain it because it is self-sustaining. The acquisition of immortality allows a person to pass beyond this physical existence into the Family of God. See 1.Cor.15:51-54; Rom.2:7; 2.Tim.1:9-10; 1.Pet.4: 6; Rev.20:6.

Although immortality represents the highest reward that is granted for faithfulness to God, there is much more to immortality than floating around heaven playing harp music for eternity. God the Father has something far more spectacular in store for those who are found worthy to take part in the first resurrection. Some of the things that he has reserved for his firstborn sons of his new creation include becoming joint-heirs and co-rulers with Christ, becoming Kings and Priests, and inheriting the Kingdom of God. These are only a few of the enormous and awesome rewards that the Father has promised to those he calls to salvation today:

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them to us by his Spirit: for his Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God" (1.Cor.2:9-10 KJV).

Commitment and Loyalty

Because the magnitude of the opportunity for eternal rewards in the Family and Kingdom of God during the Gospel age is so great, the Father and Jesus Christ require total commitment and loyalty from those who will become the first of the Father's new creation. No one who is unwilling to be obedient to his way of life will be allowed to enter his Family and Kingdom.
The Call to Salvation

The call to salvation and immortality during this age is a unique opportunity that has been carefully planned and directed by God the Father. Those called to enter the Father's Family and Kingdom at the first resurrection have an opportunity for glory, honor, and unimaginable benefits as the Father's firstborn sons. However, those who are called and refuse to grow toward spiritual maturity and treat this great and awesome calling in a casual manner are in danger of losing the rewards that are promised for faithful service and their opportunity to live forever.

Although there are many scriptures that speak of the opportunities that the Father offers to those he has specifically called to salvation from the foundation of the world, there are also many that give serious warnings to those who forsake their calling. There are also many scriptures that give encouragement to those who are willing to make a diligent effort to secure eternal and immortal life.

Three of the major prophecies that contain both serious warnings and great encouragement are found in the Books of Matthew, Luke, and Revelation. These three books speak of the opportunities that the Father offers to those he has specifically called to salvation from the foundation of the world, and they warn of the terror that awaits those who forsake their calling. Within these prophecies are the keys to overcoming the greatest obstacles that confront the elect of God. They are keys to obtaining spiritual knowledge, understanding, and strength to overcome one's self and the world in order to secure the eternal and immortal life that has been offered by God the Father.

A WARNING AND AN OPPORTUNITY

Although some of the information contained in these prophecies is shocking, painful, terrifying, and even discouraging at times, these prophecies contain a bigger picture of hope and encouragement to those who read and heed these serious warnings.

All the elect face trials, persecution, and correction by Jesus Christ in varying degrees. God the Father and Jesus Christ give tremendous support in order for us to successfully obtain salvation and participate in the first resurrection.

Notice what the Father and Jesus want for those called to salvation:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise—, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2.Pet.3:9 Para.).

Below are a few of the many encouraging promises God the Father and Jesus Christ have made to the elect of God who take the time and make the effort to diligently and faithfully pursue a life of righteousness, service to God, and spiritual growth.
Trials of Life

"God is faithful, who will not try you above what you are able to endure, but will, with the trial, make a way to escape, so that you may be able to endure it" (1.Cor.10:13 Para.).

"Who comforts us in all our trials, that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble, by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God" (2.Cor.1:4 Para.).

No Fear in Love

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. . ." (1.Jn.4:18 Para.).

"For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2.Tim.1:7 KJV).

Do all Through Jesus

"For I have learned, in whatever state I am, in this to be content. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound;—I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me" (Phil.4:11-13 Para.).

We Shall Reign With Jesus

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2.Tim 2:12 KJV).

The Prize

"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. . .I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil.3:11,13-14 KJV).

The Father and Jesus Will Never Forsake Us

"For he has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do to me" (Heb.13:5-6 Para.).

"Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb.4:16 KJV).

Though severe trials and persecution may be required, God the Father and Jesus Christ will provide the strength one needs to come through them victoriously. It is their love that makes this possible. Claim that love and take action! As you study these prophetic warnings to the elect of God, remember the following scripture:
"All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness so that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17 KJV).

By B.L. Cocherell and Charles E. Barrett

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THE SEVEN CHURCHES

In the Book of Revelation there are many messages that contain vital information concerning life and death matters for the elect of God. If the Father has called you to salvation during this gospel age of salvation, these messages are for your benefit. They should be taken to heart if you are serious about your salvation and eternal existence. How you grow spiritually and perform your responsibilities before God the Father and Jesus Christ in the times just ahead is in your hands. You can take the warnings in these two chapters to heart and be blessed, or ignore them and suffer the consequences.

God the Father and Jesus Christ have designed a plan for the salvation of all mankind and within this plan, some people are offered an awesome opportunity to participate in the first resurrection, which is a better resurrection. All those who participate in the first resurrection are called to be kings and priests, and will be given immortality in the same way that God the Father and Jesus Christ have immortality.

Because the opportunity to participate in the first resurrection brings with it such tremendous rewards and responsibilities in the Family and Kingdom of God, it is extremely important to understand that God the Father will give neither eternal life nor immortality to anyone who is unwilling to remain faithful and steadfast, and do the things that he requires.

A Warning to the Elect of God

The messages recorded in chapters two and three of Revelation are about the characteristics of the seven churches of God that will exist in the end of the age. These messages contain serious reprimands and dire warnings of severe correction of the elect of God by Jesus Christ. Each of the seven messages ends with the following admonition:

"He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches."

Unfortunately, during this age of God's church, the majority of those who have been called to the body of the elect are forgetting or have already forgotten the awesome meaning of their calling and responsibilities to God the Father and Jesus Christ. Most are in a sad state of spiritual decay and in need of a dramatic change in attitude and behavior before the arrival of Jesus Christ.

The messages of Revelation two and three clearly reveals the severity of correction that will be required to awaken many of God's people to their extremely dangerous situation. It is clear from these reprimands and warnings to the seven churches that Jesus will take whatever measures are necessary in order to stir God's people into action, so they will not lose their salvation.
Therefore, if we are indeed living in the times just before Christ returns, it is imperative to recognize that nearly all the prophecies of the Book of Revelation are written in the context of the time of the end. Even if we are not in these times, these warning messages to God's people still apply and directly impact all whom the Father has called to be his elect children.

A Book of Revealing

The first thing we need to realize is that the Book of Revelation is a book of revealing, and most of it is written to the elect of God who live just before Christ's return:

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants [the elect] what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John" (Para.). Jesus told John to, "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later" (Rev. 1:19 NIV).

The prophecies in chapters two and three of Revelation show that all but about one seventh of the entire elect of God who live during this age will receive severe persecution, because God the Father and Jesus Christ find their attitudes, behaviors, and/or spiritual works unrighteous and unworthy of being rewarded with eternal and immortal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.

In order to awaken errant individuals whom the Father has called to salvation to their serious problems so they can be saved from eternal death and enter into the Family and Kingdom of God, Jesus will bring a reprimand upon them in the form of severe persecution.

The warnings to the seven ancient churches of Asia are unmistakably meant for Christians of today and should be viewed as an extremely serious matter, because how you view these warnings will determine your eternal destiny.

TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

"I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forever, Amen; and have the keys of death and the grave. Write the things that you have seen, and the things which are, and the things that are about to occur. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw on my right, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks that you saw are the seven churches" (Rev. 1:18-20 Para.).

This prophecy was given to the apostle John around 90 A.D., which was long after the early church had powerfully proclaimed the gospel. Most of what the apostle John saw in his vision was prophetic and for this present age. Although some of the information concerning the seven churches in Asia was meant for John's lifetime, it was prophetic and meant for future generations of Christians as well.
Those who first proclaimed the gospel as instructed by Jesus went throughout the world, but they made a point to go wherever the tribes of Israel were scattered among the nations. These people did a great work and established many congregations of God who practiced the faith with varying degrees of zeal.

When the work of the early church was complete, the church vanished from the world scene as a powerful entity. From the context of what is recorded in the scriptures and secular history about the demise of the early church and what is written about the elect of God and these seven churches in the Book of Revelation, it is clear that these seven churches represent congregations of God and/or groups and individuals who exist as real entities during the time just before Christ's return.

Although all seven of these prophetic churches participate in the proclaiming of the gospel at the end of this age, all except one have major spiritual problems that, if not corrected, will bring the wrath of Jesus Christ upon them. In an attempt to cause these individuals to wake up to their sins and spiritual lethargy, so that they can repent and be saved from eternal death, Jesus Christ will severely persecute them.

**THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF EPHESUS**

Notice that this message to the Ephesians is directly from Jesus Christ who walks among the seven churches and is the head of the church:

"To the angel [messenger] of the church of Ephesus write; These things says he [Jesus Christ] that holds the seven stars in his right hand, . . . I know your works, and labor, and your patience, and how you cannot bear them that are evil: and you have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars: and have borne, and have patience, and for my name's sake have labored, and have not fainted" (Rev.2:1-3 Para.).

Those who have the attitudes and behaviors of a spiritual Ephesian persevere, work hard, and try to keep false teachers out of the church. However, the Ephesians have a major problem that needs to be corrected:

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of its place except you repent" (Rev.2:4-5 Para.).

Although the Ephesians do not tolerate wickedness, are solidly against evil, and hate idolatry and immorality, they lose their first love, which is the love of the Father, his Son, his truth, and their fellow man. They become rigid to the point of self-righteousness and impose their own human standards over God's righteous standards. They forget their awesome calling and the importance of the Father's royal law of love.
The Ephesians seem to forget that a major part of their calling and mission is to grow in grace, knowledge, and love for the things of God. They lose their intense love and zeal for God and have fallen into apathy at the final call to battle. Jesus warns them to rekindle their love and zeal for God and his ways or he will remove their candlestick. This is an extremely serious warning. Because the candlestick symbolizes the entire Ephesian group, Jesus is saying that he will remove them from among his followers. And because the candlestick also represents spiritual truth, he will also remove the truth of God from their hearts and minds; thereby, he will take away their eternal reward and position in the Family and Kingdom of God.

Today, Jesus Christ is saying that, if you do not repent and have a change of attitude toward your calling and return back to your first love, he will remove the spiritual light from your life. Without spiritual light, a person dies spiritually and will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. Therefore, anyone who has accepted the Father's call to salvation better take their calling very seriously.

Although the Ephesians do many positive things (Rev.2:6), they do not maintain their first love. As far as Jesus is concerned, they are not fit for his Family and Kingdom. Ephesians who let their love die as a result of becoming rigid in their belief system and their own way of doing things must repent or they will die spiritually and eternally:

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" (Rev.2:7 NIV).

Those who overcome the trials and tests of this life, remain in a repentant attitude, and maintain their love and zeal for the Father and Christ will have eternal life and immortality as symbolized in the eating from the Tree of Life.

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF SMYRNA

"And to the angel [messenger] of the church in Smyrna write; These things says the first and the last [Jesus Christ], which was dead, and is alive; I know your works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but you are rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which you shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days: be you faithful to death, and I will give you a crown of life. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches: He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death" (Rev.2: 8-11 Para.).

Once again, we see the positive aspects of these elect as they try to do things right. Yet some will suffer imprisonment and even martyrdom to test their faithfulness. This is a group of the elect that will face severe trials and persecution in the time just before Christ's return.
The English word *tribulation* is from the Greek word *thilipsis*, which means crushing beneath a weight. The word *poverty* is from the Greek *ptocheia*, which means real destitution. Those of Smyrna are under much personal pressure and have virtually no material goods.

One reason for this poverty is the natural order of things, like that seen in economically disadvantaged countries and the lower economic class of society as a whole. In the early church, the elect were impoverished as a result of persecution that caused them to flee to other areas. And sometimes their goods were stolen while they were being beaten in their own homes for their beliefs. The prophecies indicate that these conditions will also exist during the time just before Christ returns.

Some of spiritual Smyrna will suffer imprisonment for ten days (i.e., a limited length of time) during a time of intense persecution that will come to an end. However, in the ancient world, imprisonment was just a prelude to being executed. Thus, many of this group of elect may end up being persecuted and some will be imprisoned before being executed.

Christ is telling those of Smyrna that he and his Father demand absolute loyalty even in the face of death. Christ warns those of Smyrna not to give up but to remain steadfast in the faith and become overcomers through their persecution, imprisonment, and physical death in order to obtain the crown of eternal life.

In addition, Smyrna is filled with internal strife and persecution caused by those who are not truly converted. Instead of removing the cause of their trouble or removing themselves from the problem in accordance to clear scriptural instructions, many of those of Smyrna will suffer persecution from within and outside of the church.

**THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF Pergamos**

Historically, Pergamos was the administrative center of Asia, and in the first century it was a center of Caesar worship. This is why it is referred to as Satan's seat. Pergamos was a city where people were required to worship Caesar or die and where Satan resided.

"And to the angel [messenger] of the church in Pergamos write: These things says he [Jesus Christ] which has the sharp sword with two edges; I know your works, and where you dwell, even where Satan's seat is: and you hold fast my name, and have not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells" (Rev.2:12-13 Para.).

Jesus praises those of Pergamos for not being afraid to be called Christians and for holding onto the faith, even after one of their group was martyred for being faithful. However, notice in verses 14-16 what Christ has against some of them. Some held the teaching of Balaam who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating things sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality:
"But I have a few things against you, because you have there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So you also have them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come quickly to you, and will make war with them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev.2:14-16 Para.).

What is said about some of the elect of Pergamos can also be said about some of the elect today. Today's society is extremely promiscuous with many sexual perversions being accepted and practiced. And some of the elect of God, including their spiritual leaders, suffer from the same attitudes and behaviors found in ancient Pergamos. Because of this, Christ says that he will fight against those of Pergamos who do such abominable things. This is an extremely serious warning; Jesus Christ does not play games with a person's salvation. Therefore, any to whom this warning applies should take it very seriously and act appropriately.

Those of ancient Pergamos lived in an environment where Satan's influence, through false religions, was exceptionally strong and some of the elect had compromised God's standards in order to avoid problems with the society around them. Rather than having an attitude of coming out of this society and being separate as God requires of his elect children (2.Cor.6:17), they became a part of the evil society around them.

Christ warns that any of the elect who have an attitude of compromise concerning the truth of God during the time just prior to his return will find themselves at war with him. Remember that the word of God cuts as a two edged sword and causes division between those who truly believe and those who do not. Therefore, we can assume that division over what is right and wrong will cause great turmoil among those with the attitude of Pergamos. They will be persecuted by the world and warned by Jesus Christ of his intent to kill those of his church who refuse to behave righteously and avoid partaking of the evils of this society:

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it" (Rev.2:17 Para.).

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF THYATIRA

"And to the angel [messenger] of the church in Thyatira write; These things says the Son of God [Jesus Christ], who has his eyes like to a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know your works, and charity, and service, and faith, and your patience, and your works; and the last to be more than the first" (Rev.2:18-19 Para.).

Once again, Jesus offers much praise for the good done by this group of the elect; however, there is a very serious problem that needs to be corrected if they are to be successful in gaining eternal and immortal life.
"Not withstanding I have a few things against you, because you suffer that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searches the mind and heart: and I will give to every one of you according to your works" (Rev.2:20-23 Para.).

The problems within Thyatira did not come from outside the church, but came from within. These problems began with Thyatira's acceptance of the teachings of a woman who was thought to be a prophetess from God, but who in actuality was an evil person like king Ahab's wife Jezebel. This woman urged them to compromise in order to comply with the world's standards.

This false prophetess was not necessarily trying to destroy the church; she just wanted the elect to view the truth of God in a more liberal way than Jesus Christ and the apostles had taught. However, her teachings led to compromise, which resulted in sexual sins and idolatry.

On the surface the elect at Thyatira seem very productive with many good works. Yet, they are self-seeking and deceived because they have been following the false teaching of a false prophetess. Therefore, the serious warning to them from Jesus that their salvation is in jeopardy.

Many of Thyatira will receive the trial of fire because of their lack of zeal for God's truth. Jesus will put them through great persecution and even martyrdom in an attempt to awaken them to their sinful condition and give them a final opportunity to repent. Jesus warns that he will kill the unrepentant in order to purge and purify his Father's sons:

"But to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put on you no other burden" (Rev.2:24 Para.).

Some of God's people have deliberately sought to do evil. But why? The teachings of the ancient Jezebel seemed to encourage sin, because one could repent and accept God's graciousness and make God look good. Many today have actually built this case by corrupting the scriptures and thereby turning God's grace into a license to sin.

Although these people show service, faith, love, and perseverance, it is apparent that they desire to be entertained rather than instructed, to be soothed rather than corrected, and to be more of a social club than an educated congregation. On the surface this church seems like a dynamic group with great works, yet they do not really want to be educated in God's truth nor follow his spiritual ways.
At the center of Thyatira's problems is the acceptance of the teachings of a false prophetess and, perhaps, in some cases, a false prophet. Many of these people appear to be righteous, but they will not easily give up their false beliefs. This group has a problem of compromising God's truth and accepting false teachings. To those of Thyatira who are carefully and zealously following the teachings of God, Christ says:

"But that which you have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcomes, and keeps my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to pieces: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that has an ear let him hear what the spirit says to the churches" (Rev.2:25-29 Para.).

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF SARDIS

"And to the angel [messenger] of the church in Sardis write: These things says he [Jesus Christ] that has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember, therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If you will not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis that have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Rev.3:1-4 Para.).

Within the Sardis grouping of the elect, there are only a few who have not defiled themselves spiritually. The implication is that unless there is a major change in their attitude and behavior, most who have the attitude of the Sardis church will end up in the Lake of Fire.

The first time a person makes a serious mistake after their conversion, they may recognize this as a sin due to a weakness in their life. If a person deals with it at the time and resolves to change, the problem will be overcome. But, if one compromises themselves again and again, each subsequent compromise becomes easier and easier until self-delusion sets in and sin becomes an acceptable way of conducting oneself before God the Father and Christ. A person with the Sardis attitude does not truly believe that the wages of sin brings eternal death. See Rom.6:23.

The congregations pictured as Sardis do not appear to be troubled by heresy because they do not have anyone among them who is thinking enough to come up with a heresy. They are so spiritually dead and so lazy that they just accept whatever doctrines seem pleasant and easy to comply with. They are just drifting along in ignorance to their plight and the serious danger that confronts them. This church is not likely to be troubled by an attack by Satan or any other outside source, because the truth is that they are so spiritually dead already they are not worth the effort to attack.
The warning to those of Sardis is that they had better quickly wake up to their deadly lethargy and watch out, because their salvation is in jeopardy. Christ also warns that within the congregations of Sardis there are only a few who truly love the Father and his Son and are following the ways of God. Jesus encourages these few to continue to be watchful and they will receive their reward. However, most of their brothers and sisters in Christ only appear to be spiritually alive but are in reality spiritually dead and will die the second death in the Lake of Fire if they do not repent of their evil ways. Vigilance is really part of the price of liberty under Christ.

Christ is telling the lethargic elect of Sardis to think back to when they first heard the truth of God and the Father’s good news about his Son and salvation and to remember the time of their spiritual awakening and their repentance and conversion to a son of God.

Most of Sardis are in great danger. They have accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as their own and have known the Father; therefore, they are having their opportunity for salvation. But, because of their sins, they are on the pathway that leads to eternal death. That is why this warning is so severe. They have little or no will to prayerfully study God's word or to use it on a continuing basis to help them overcome their spiritual flaws. They are so self-deceived that they do not even realize that the little truth they have is slipping away and that they are in danger of losing their salvation.

Christ says in order to be among the overcomers whom he will accept, any with the Sardis attitude must awaken from the deadly lethargy and show some signs of repentance and change:

"He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white garments; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches" (Rev.3:5-6 Para.).

Those of Sardis are not fulfilling their responsibilities to grow in grace and knowledge nor are they fulfilling their commission properly. Most in Sardis are complacent and are not trying to live a righteous life. They have allowed the truth of God to slip away, and Jesus considers them spiritually dead.

Because they have stopped trying to overcome, Jesus sees no benefit in pursuing their salvation any further and will allow them to die if they do not make an effort to repent and live righteously.

Make no mistake, only the overcomer will keep their name from being blotted out of the book of life. Jesus says that any with the attitude of Sardis are on the verge of losing their eternal life because of a compromising, complacent, and lazy attitude toward the things of God and their calling. What a terrible accusation from our Lord and Savior.
Those of Sardis have a reputation for being alive; however, they are in fact already spiritually dead.

Few from Sardis will pass the test of persecution, because they are lazy and uninspired by the awesome opportunity that they have been given to be among the first of humanity to enter the Family and Kingdom of God as immortal sons of God the Father. The elect of Sardis still have hope of obtaining salvation, if they will only repent and endure to the end with a righteous attitude.

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF PHILADELPHIA

Only one of the seven groupings of God's elect children is used by Jesus to carry out the final dynamic preaching of the gospel. Although others of the elect may be given awesome gifts from God to work great miracles and perform a great witness, those of Philadelphia seem to be the only ones who are empowered with the gifts shown in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, and Romans 12:6-8, in order to reach out to the world as a whole, both within the body of the elect and through worldwide evangelism:

"And to the angel [messenger] of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says he [Jesus Christ] that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens: I know your works: behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name" (Rev.3:7-8 Para.).

Notice the emphasis upon having kept Christ's word and not denying Christ's name. In the Greek language, the verbs are in the aorist tense, which describes a definite, specific act in the past. The implication is that there has been some particular spiritual trial out of which those of Philadelphia have emerged victorious. It is for this reason that God uses and empowers them to perform a great work for him in the end of the age.

Part of the reward for having the Philadelphia attitude and behavior is to be given an extremely prominent position in the Family and Kingdom of God: a position worthy of great respect and honor:

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and bow before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept the word of my patience, I will also keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon all the inhabitable earth, in order to try those dwelling on earth. Behold, I come quickly. Hold what you have so that no one takes your crown" (Rev.3:9-11 Para.).
Only those with the Philadelphia attitude and behavior are given a significant measure of protection by God. This does not mean that they are totally free from persecution or even martyrdom. But of all God’s children, they are the only ones who have major protection promised to them in order for them to proclaim the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God, whereas the rest of God's elect children will be severely reprimanded by Jesus Christ through the word of God and the persecution by Satan and the world at large in order to try, purify, perfect, and save them from eternal death.

"The one who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall not go out any more. And I will write the name of my God on him, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God; and my new name. He who has an ear, hear what the spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 3:12-13 Para.).

Those of Philadelphia may only have a little strength, and their resources and numbers may be small, but they are faithful to God and his plan for the salvation of humanity. Notice, Jesus also said that they have kept his commandments; therefore, he will keep them. They are keeping God's word, the word of endurance. Those of Philadelphia try hard to practice the kind of endurance that Jesus Christ displayed. They are people who do not compromise; they endure and firmly keep in mind the goal that God has for them and humanity.

A Warning

Those of the Philadelphia attitude and behavior are the only ones who have a completely positive description. They are faithfully keeping God's word, they are not denying Jesus' name, and they are enduring patiently with persistence. Because of this, they are promised special protection against Satan in order to do a mighty work for God. Yet there is a serious warning within the message to them.

Jesus Christ warns them to hold on to what they have, so that no one takes their crown. This is not an issue of theft; it is an issue of becoming unworthy to wear the crown. Jesus gives responsibilities, opportunities, and physical and spiritual gifts to each of his Father's elect. If a person performs their responsibility, seizes the opportunity, and properly uses the gifts they have been given, they will be rewarded accordingly; they have a crown reserved for them to wear in the Family and Kingdom of God. But, if they prove themselves unfit, Jesus will give their task to someone else and they will lose their reward and perhaps their eternal life.
Seize the Moment

It is very clear that God wants all the elect to serve him in various ways. The point is that God watches for individuals and even groups of individuals who will take hold of a particular opportunity to serve him. If they act, God uses them in that responsibility. God the Father and Jesus look at each of those who have been called to salvation as individuals and if they seize the moment and take action, God will use them in his great and awesome plan for the salvation of humanity.

From what is written about the church of Philadelphia it seems that this group of people are in the forefront of proclaiming the gospel message. Because they have a correct attitude toward God and are actively performing the task that they have been given, they receive no correction from Christ. In fact, they are spared from the hour of trial that comes upon the whole earth and will receive an incredibly awesome reward for their diligence.

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF LAODICEA

"To the angel [messenger] of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things says the Amen [Jesus Christ], the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I wished that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit you out of my mouth" (Rev.3:14-16 Para.).

Of all the seven congregational groupings of God's elect directly spoken to by Jesus Christ, this group is the most pointedly reprimanded. They are neither faithful nor unbelieving; rather, they are completely indifferent. Their indifference to God's truth is sickening to Jesus. The Laodiceans are so self-satisfied that they think everything is fine and that they are doing great works. They view themselves as the recipients of great spiritual understanding, but they have practically none.

"Because you say, 'I am rich; and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched, and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I advise you to buy from me gold having been refined in the fire by me, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, and your shame and nakedness may not be revealed. And anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see" (Rev.3:17-18 Para.).

Here, we see a people who are so apathetic and lazy because of their perceived knowledge and spirituality that they are in danger of being cast away from God. They are self-deceived into thinking that they are spiritually rich; however, they are not. Christ is giving them their last opportunity to repent and become zealous for God. If these people will hear and heed what he is saying, he will again establish fellowship with them. If not, they will be cast into the Lake of Fire with the unrepentant wicked.
Christ is searching for people that want him and his Father to be a major part of their life. He says he is at the door knocking, hoping the wayward elect will let him back into their hearts and minds. But he will not force his way into their lives. These individuals have to make a decision to repent of their nauseating quality of being spiritually lukewarm, self-satisfied, complacent, and in need of nothing.

Their indifference has left them self-deluded and they do not realize they are spiritually poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked. Those who lead such a people and do not themselves repent are in deep trouble. These individuals have an attitude of having it made, but have no real commitment for spiritual growth. They feel secure as long as they associate with a particular group (i.e., success by association). That kind of attitude leads to indifference and complacency, which Christ severely rebukes. He will bring fiery trials in order to bring those with such an attitude to genuine repentance:

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous then, and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock; If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in to him, and I will dine with him and he with me" (Rev.3:19-20 Para.).

The Greek word elegchein, which is used in connection with the rebuke of those with the Laodicean attitude, means a severe rebuke that compels a person to see the error of their ways. Christ is showing, in an extremely strong way, that some of the elect who are in this decadent condition can expect extremely severe trials that come directly from him.

Because of their self-righteous attitudes, Jesus says they will be tried in fire. A Laodicean needs a major attitude adjustment in order for him to be used by God and allowed to enter the Father's Family and Kingdom. This is why Jesus has to deal so severely with them. But God the Father and his son are extremely merciful. If a Laodicean repents, he will be forgiven and welcomed into the Family and Kingdom of God:

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches" (Rev.3:21-22 NIV).

SUMMARY

The messages to the seven churches are not only meant to be a severe reprimand from Christ but also to give hope and encouragement. For those who do not heed these warnings, there is death and dishonor ahead. For those who heed them, there is eternal life and immortality in the Family and Kingdom of God.
God the Father and Jesus Christ are in the process of molding the body of the sons of God for an awesome and dynamic spiritual work to be done at the end of this age. But not everyone that is called to this dynamic work will be in one united congregation. There are seven distinct groupings of the elect shown to exist during the times just prior to Christ's return.

Because each of us stands or falls to a certain degree based on our association with other people, each of us needs to recognize if we have any of the unrighteous attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics that Jesus warns the seven churches about. We also need to recognize if we are associating with individuals or congregations of God that exhibit these unrighteous traits. If we do not recognize these things in time and take the appropriate action to repent and remove ourselves from sinful people who refuse to change their ways, we will find ourselves in jeopardy of losing our own salvation and becoming the recipients of strong correction from Christ in the form of severe persecution.

A Time of Great Trouble

Any of the elect of God who are alive during the time of the end and think that they will live out their lives in peaceful co-existence with non-believers while Jesus Christ pours out the wrath of God upon a wicked and rebellious world are not in touch with reality.

The battle lines have already been drawn, the hour of conflict is set, and the warning messages to the seven churches shows that unrighteous attitudes and behavior have rendered all but one-seventh of the elect of God ill-equipped and unfit for spiritual battle.

It seems that only a few of the elect understand the seriousness of the times that we live in and the things that God the Father and Jesus Christ require of them. Most of the elect think everything is just fine. But things are not just fine; this is why Jesus will pour out his wrath on all but one-seventh of those of his church. Make no mistake, Jesus would much rather see those who need to repent do so without having to be corrected through trial and persecution. However, because Jesus loves us deeply, he will attempt to shake the lazy, the lethargic, and the sinful out of their sleep of death with strong persecution and trials of fire, in the hope that they will awaken to their terminal condition and repent.

The Core Issue

In today's world, the elect are continually bombarded with evil from the world around them. Many have allowed themselves to become influenced by wrong values and have compromised themselves and become blind to their sins.
It is easy to see how wrong attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics of the seven ancient churches of Asia mentioned in Revelation exist within various individuals and congregations of God scattered throughout the earth today. We can almost say, in a sense, that the die is already cast and that birds of a feather have flocked together. It is also easy to see why these attitudes and behaviors bring severe correction upon God's people from Jesus Christ who is the head of the church.

Separate from the World

Although all seven churches suffer great persecution for the truth that they believe and practice, the general admonition to all of God's people is to come out of and remain separate from the things of the world that can pollute one spiritually:

"For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues" (Rev.18:3-4 Para.).

Because of the increased activity of evil spirits during the time of the end, there will be great religious confusion (especially concerning the teachings of the Bible). As people become more and more confused as to what is right and wrong, God's people who are not diligent in their pursuit of righteousness will be drawn into evil behavior and compromising attitudes; thereby, they will lose the love and zeal that they once had for God.

Jesus often spoke to the disciples about the need to perform the task that they had been given concerning the gospel and the persecution and rewards associated with its proclamation:

"And when he had called the people to him along with his disciples, he said, Whoever desires to follow me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever will save his life shall lose it; but whoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mk.8:34-38 Para.). See also 1.Pet.3:14-17.
It is sad that of the seven church groups noted in the Book of Revelation that exists today, only one is found to be totally committed to the Father and Jesus Christ and their ways. The other six are in varying degrees of rebellion and disobedience to the Father and Jesus Christ and the truth of God. Make no mistake, the Father and Jesus Christ are solidly against the tolerance of evil. They want the elect to either repent and remove the evil from among them or remove themselves from the evil.

During these times before Christ's return, there are two primary questions that each of us who is a son of God needs to answer in reference to the messages in chapters two and three of Revelation:

1. Is God the Father's calling to be part of his family and the kingdom of priests truly my first priority?

2. Am I going to be responsible for my life and my conduct and consistently strive to overcome my faults through the spiritual power that God has made available for me to draw upon?

"Truly I say to you, There is no man that has left his house, brothers, sisters, father, mother, wife, children, or lands for my sake, and the gospel's. But that he shall receive an hundredfold now and in this time, houses, brothers, sisters, mother, children, and lands, and with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mk.10: 29-30 KJV Para.).

Terrifying and dynamic things are going to occur in the world during the proclaiming of the Father's good news to humanity just before Jesus Christ's return as the conquering King of kings. The elect need to heed the warning: "He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit [Jesus Christ] says to the churches." The eternal destiny of each individual whom the Father has called to salvation and that is alive at this time hangs in the balance. Be a person who has an ear to hear what Jesus Christ is saying to all the Father's elect children. If your heart is right with God, you do not need to fear a severe reprimand from Christ, nor should you be anxious about your salvation.

Each individual who is called to salvation during this gospel age should contemplate the seriousness of the messages to the seven churches and heed the reprimands and warnings which are given in them.

Those who heed these warnings and reprimands and diligently pursue a righteous life will receive the awesome rewards promised by God the Father and Jesus Christ.

By B.L. Cocherell and C.E. Barrett
THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

The parable of the ten virgins in the 25th chapter of Matthew contains lessons for all of God's elect children regardless of when they are called to salvation. This parable is easily understood as a prophecy for the end of the age because it is set within a group of parables in which the only subject matter discussed is Christ's return and those who will be allowed to enter the Family and Kingdom of God at that time.

MATTHEW 25:1-13 NIV

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep" (vs.1-5).

"At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut" (vs.6-10).

"Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour wherein the Son of man comes" (vs.11-13).

Because the fulfillment of this prophetic parable will clearly be in the end of the age when the elect of God are anticipating the return of Jesus as King of kings, it seems to be very much a part of the warning message that is given to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation.

It is important to examine this parable in detail along with other parables concerning the same topic in order to discover an extremely valuable lesson for the elect of God today.

"At that time [the time of the end] the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins [the Father's elect children] who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom" (v1).

It is very clear that the ten virgins represent a significant part of the entire body of elect. Because of the warning messages in Revelation 2 and 3 to the seven churches of God which will exist just before Christ's return, it appears likely that the ten virgins represent all the elect that exist during the end of the age, except for those of the Philadelphia church: This will be explained further along in this study.
Perhaps the reason that there are ten virgins divided into two groups is the numerical meaning of the numbers 10 and 5 as they apply to biblical symbolism. The number 10 is symbolic of the law of God and the number 5 is symbolic of God's grace. It is also a biblical fact that no one will enter the Family and Kingdom of God who is unwilling to practice the law of God. Even then, entry is only granted to those whom the Father calls to salvation through his grace.

This parable indicates that all of these people knew that the banquet would occur very soon and they were looking forward to the arrival of the bridegroom (Jesus Christ at the first resurrection) and participating in the celebration after his arrival.

The Wise and the Foolish

"Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps" (vs.2-4).

Jesus immediately separates those who are awaiting his return into two types of individuals: the wise and the foolish. Notice that all of the virgins began their wait with full lamps, which seems to indicate that they all had anticipated that they were going to have to wait in the darkness for some time before the bridegroom came to bring them into the wedding banquet. Moreover, the wise anticipated that they might have to wait far into the night before the bridegroom came, so they brought extra oil in order to keep their lights burning as long as necessary.

Because being wise or foolish is clearly associated with the necessity of keeping the lamps burning, it is important to understand the symbolism of the lamps:

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psa.119:105 Para.).

A lamp symbolizes the word of God (i.e., the truth of God) which lights one's pathway through life.

"My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching [allegorically referring to God the Father and Jesus Christ]. Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life" (Pro.6:20-23 Para.).

The lamp represents the laws, precepts, and principles of God that are to guide a person in the righteous way of life.
The primary emphasis in verses 2-4 is upon keeping one's lamp lit (i.e., making sure a person has enough of God's truth to light their spiritual pathway), because if a person's lamp runs out of oil, they are left in spiritual darkness and will be unable to find their spiritual way. Jesus considers anyone who allows their light run out of fuel, foolish and undeserving of entrance into the Kingdom of God.

"The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep" (v5).

Each person considered to be one of these virgins falls asleep. This is very important because it tells us who is considered one of the ten virgins within the body of Christ. When one reads the warning messages to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, it is very clear that only one of the seven churches that will exist in the end of the age does not go to sleep—the Philadelphia church.

Nowhere in the message to the elect of Philadelphia do we find them pictured as being asleep. On the contrary, they are shown as being the zealous elect who are commended for faithfully keeping the truth of God and upholding the name of Jesus. Thus, it is clear that the parable of the 10 virgins is talking about the rest of the elect who are all spiritually asleep just before Christ's return and the first resurrection.

What happened during the first age of the church is an example of what we see today among most of the elect of God. As time went on and Christ did not return to establish his Father's Kingdom on earth, many became apathetic and went to sleep spiritually. History shows us that because of spiritual lethargy the early church disappeared as a united, powerful entity. However, throughout the centuries, there have been a few among the elect of God who have kept awake while the great majority have gone to sleep.

Although it is not stated in this parable, it is clear from Revelation 2 and 3 and other prophecies in the Bible that the Father actively calls many people to participate in the first resurrection in preparation for the return of Christ. It is these elect who are spoken of as the ten virgins who fell asleep. They are the ones who once looked for Jesus Christ's return with great excitement, zeal, and anticipation, but have fallen asleep spiritually.

**Christ's Return**

If this is truly the age in which Christ will return, the parable of the ten virgins is clearly symbolic of many individuals who have been called to salvation. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the body of the elect thought Christ's return was very near and would happen before the end of the twentieth century. Many people thought he would return no later than 1975. When it became apparent that this was not going to happen, many of the elect, except those of the Philadelphia church, went to sleep. In other words, they believed that "The Lord delays his coming" (Lk.12:45).
The foolish became apathetic and went back into the ways of the society around them. Many ceased to associate with an organized congregation, believing that they would worship God by themselves. But, what many were really doing was abandoning their calling. Many of these people stopped observing the Passover, the annual festivals, and the Sabbath and even began observing pagan holidays again. Others held on to the basic truth they had learned and continued to be nominal Christians, attending Sabbath services and fellowshipping with one another. But, had stopped growing in grace and knowledge.

During this same period, the Philadelphia elect maintained faithfulness, diligence, study, and a good relationship with their heavenly Father and their Savior, while continuing to be overcomers. The Philadelphians never went to sleep. These individuals based their faith on their heavenly Father and their Savior, not on men or organizations. Today, these individuals are rooted in their heavenly Father's calling and in the salvation which comes through his Son's sacrificial blood. These individuals recognize that their calling transcends human beings and organizations.

Those considered to be the Philadelphia elect continue to maintain a positive relationship with their heavenly Father and their Savior. This is why Christ is going to use them in a major way to proclaim his Father's message as a warning and a witness to the world before his return.

The Midnight Cry

"At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him" (v6).

This midnight cry will happen very close to Christ's return (perhaps only 3½ to 6 years prior to his return). It is a warning message to God the Father's elect throughout the earth to awake out of their spiritual slumber and repent of their wrong attitudes and behaviors and pursue their calling to salvation with zeal, because Jesus Christ is about to return.

Who Gives the Midnight Cry?

But who will give the alarm to the elect of God? There is a high probability that the ones who give this warning are the elect of the church of Philadelphia, because they are the only ones who have not gone to sleep and have been promised an open door to preach the gospel.

This cry of warning follows the pattern of all the warnings given by prophets to God's people throughout history. God never lets his people go into severe trials without a resounding warning and an opportunity to repent. The issue here is a very serious one. It is an issue of salvation or the Lake of Fire. This is not a minor reprimand or chastisement. This is an issue of whether or not one will respond to the warning, repent, and return to the faith once delivered and to God the Father and Jesus Christ in a proper attitude. The window of opportunity for true repentance seems very short. It appears likely that there will be little time to get one's spiritual house in order before the door to salvation is shut forever.
All of the Elect Hear the Cry

In verse seven, when the cry went out to warn that the bridegroom is coming, "All the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps" (v7). Notice that they all woke up; they all truly realize the seriousness of the situation and begin to prepare to meet Jesus Christ. This is encouraging because it shows that Jesus Christ will make sure that all who have been called by God the Father to salvation will get a wake up call.

The Wise and the Foolish

This parable clearly shows that when the midnight cry goes out, there will be a very quick separation made between the wise and the foolish, based on attitude and behavior. This parable also indicates that as many as half of the elect who comprise six of the prophetic churches noted in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 are not going to enter into the Sovereign Father's heavenly family and kingdom.

The Wise

It appears that when the midnight cry rings out, the wise who have hung onto basic truth concerning salvation, will see the seriousness of their situation and respond correctly by repenting of their poor attitude and behavior toward their heavenly Father and their Savior. Although they repent, some of these individuals will experience persecution and trials at the hands of the evil Beast System and Christ in order to help them revitalize their relationship with him and his Father.

The Foolish

"The foolish ones said to the wise, Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out. No, they replied, there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourself" (vs.8-9).

The five foolish virgins have allowed themselves to become spiritually weak and lethargic. They have not kept their heavenly Father's truth alive in their hearts through diligent study and meditation in his word and through constant communication with him. They have not done the things required in order to keep spiritual light burning brightly in their lives. They have no reserve of spiritual strength to rely upon in this time of stress. In desperation, they hope that an association with those who are in a better spiritual condition will get them into the Kingdom. These individuals have forgotten the admonition by the apostle Paul to the Philippians to "Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling" (Phil.2:12).

The five foolish virgins have allowed their calling and their understanding to erode, and they have gone so far back into the world that they cannot make the transition from unrighteousness to righteousness. They have ignored their Father's truth and ways too long and have become cold toward him.
These foolish individuals have rejected their opportunity to enter the Sovereign Father's family and kingdom:

"But while they [the foolish Christians] were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom [Christ] arrived. The virgins who were ready [the wise Christians] went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut" (v10).

When Christ gathers his Father's earthly children during the first resurrection and then returns to heaven with them, the opportunity for salvation during this gospel age will have come to an end. It will be too late for anyone who has ignored the Father's call to enter his family and kingdom as a firstborn son of his new creation.

Too Little, Too Late

"And the door was shut. Later the others also came. Sir! Sir! they said. Open the door for us! But he replied, I tell you the truth, I don't know you. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour wherein the Son of man comes" (vs.10-13).

This is clearly speaking of Jesus Christ's return to gather the elect of God at the first resurrection. Those who are wise will heed the midnight warning cry and become overcomers in the faith through trials and perhaps persecution. Thereby, they will become worthy to participate in the first resurrection and partake of the heavenly banquet with Jesus.

The door being shut implies that the other virgins are excluded from the Kingdom of God and are no longer considered the Father's elect. Once the elect are gathered from the earth, there will no longer be a person alive on earth who has the spirit of God within them. This is why Jesus says to the foolish virgins, "I don't know you." They no longer have the spirit of God available to them and they have lost their opportunity for salvation, which means that their fate is the Lake of Fire, because they did not remain faithful.

The sad truth is that, if one allows themselves to get into the condition pictured by the five foolish virgins, there is no hope of salvation. One must take positive action today, because when the midnight cry goes out, it is too late to start over again. Today is the opportunity to repent, return to the truth of God, and to reestablish a relationship with both God the Father and Jesus Christ. Tomorrow may be too late.

SIMILAR PARABLES

There are many parables similar to the parable of the ten virgins in which Jesus puts forth the same dire warning message to the Father's elect children during the time just before his return. Because of the seriousness of this subject we will explore some of these other parables in order to show that it is far better to heed the warning now, accept the truth contained in these parables, repent of wrong attitudes and behaviors, and start to grow in grace and knowledge while there is still time.
READINESS AND WATCHFULNESS

Luke 12:35-40 seems to be a part of the parable of the 10 virgins recorded by Matthew. Even if it is not, it still expands on what Jesus said about being ready to participate in the first resurrection:

"Let your loins be girded [active and faithful readiness] and your lamps [the truth of God] burning [be living in truth]. Be as men [zealous elect of God] who wait [be ready] for their lord [Jesus Christ] to return from the wedding [wedding feast] so that when he comes and knocks they will open to him" (vs.35-36 KJV).

The English words to return and from in this text are from the Greek words analuo and ex. These words can be translated to mean to leave or to return and out, of, by, from, or away from and may also indicate a source, cause, separation, or direction.

The translators' difficulty in translating the last part of this text is due to their lack of understanding the plan of God in relation to the events which surround the first resurrection and Jesus Christ's marriage to the church.

Jesus is saying that a person should always be ready to respond quickly to God's truth (have your lamps burning) when Jesus knocks at the door of one's heart and mind. When one understands that this parable speaks of being ready to participate in the first resurrection and the attending celebration, and that the ancient Jewish custom extended the marriage celebration over several days (a whole week in the case of a virgin), and the celebrating sometimes went far into the night, it becomes apparent what Jesus is saying by using the analogy of a wedding and its attending celebration.

Just as with any invitation to a wedding banquet, not all of the guests receive the invitation at the same time, nor do all of them arrive at the wedding banquet at the same time. This is the situation of those who have been called to salvation during the gospel age. However, when a wedding and its attending banquet is finished, it is finished, and those who do not get there in time will not have another opportunity to participate.

In this parable, the invited guests (the elect of God) should be ready to participate in the first resurrection and its attending celebration. We also see the bridegroom (Jesus Christ) actively encouraging those who have been invited to come and participate in the banquet.

At the end of his warning messages to the seven churches Jesus says:

"Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcomes I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev.3:20-21 Para.).
The key to securing salvation is to immediately respond in a positive manner when one comes to the understanding that one is out of alignment with God's word and in need of repentance and forgiveness. This is exactly what the wise virgins do when they are awakened from their spiritual slumber; they hear the warning and immediately refill their lamps (they make sure that the light of God's word will continue to light their pathway). The filling of the lamps also indicates that a wise Christian will use the light they have to grow in grace and knowledge, whereas the foolish will not.

**Blessings Come From Watching**

"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he comes shall find watching He will have them sit down and eat as he serves them" (Lk.12:37 Para.).

Active watching involves responsiveness, faithfulness, and effort. Why is a Christian blessed for watching? The reason is that if one actively watches (i.e., attends to the business of growing spiritually) one will be blessed with all of the things promised to those who participate in the first resurrection. Verse 37 is also a clear reference to the righteous being given rewards in God the Father's family by Jesus Christ after the first resurrection and the wedding supper of the Lamb.

"If he [Jesus Christ] comes in the second watch or the third watch [delays his coming] and still finds them watching, blessed are those servants" (Lk.12:38 Para.).

Who is watching? The Philadelphia grouping of God's people appear to be the only ones who have been consistently and faithfully watching. When the rewards of the Philadelphia grouping are examined, one can easily see how blessed these particular servants will be at the return of Christ. See Rev.3:12.

In a broader sense, this blessing also applies to the wise Christians (the five wise virgins) who are among the other six groupings of elect described in Revelation 2 and 3 who receive severe correction from Christ. Even though Christ's return appears to be delayed until the second or third watch, he does come and he finds the wise watching, because they have heeded the midnight warning cry. Because the wise are actively watching and have a reserve of oil to keep their lamps burning, they will also be blessed. When the rewards of those who heed the warnings to the churches in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 are reviewed, we see that these watchful individuals are also given substantial rewards along with eternal and immortal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.

**Be Ready**

"Be therefore, ready, for the Son of man [Jesus Christ] comes in an hour when you are not expecting him" (v40 Para.).
One must be consistent in one's faithfulness and dedication to the Father and Jesus Christ, because none of us knows the hour when Jesus Christ will come. We are each but a breath away from death, and when we die, our fate is sealed. If we have been faithful to the very end of our life, we will be in the first resurrection and will be rewarded accordingly. However, if we have been unfaithful in our walk with God, we will be punished for our wickedness in the Lake of Fire, which is the second death.

Anyone who is called to salvation must be ready, consistent, and faithful at all times. Remember, it is the person who overcomes to the end that is saved. Whenever that end comes for us, whether we die tomorrow, are martyred for our belief in the Father and his Son, or live until the return of Jesus Christ, it is the consistent overcomer who secures eternal and immortal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.

THE FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL STEWARDS

Just as the parable of the ten virgins in Luke 12:35-40 speaks about being a watchful servant, the context of the parable of the faithful and unfaithful stewards is also set in the time of the end of the age just before Christ's return at the first resurrection.

Jesus says, "Who is that faithful and wise steward [a servant of God] whom his Lord [Jesus Christ] shall make ruler over his household? . . . Blessed is that servant who his Lord [Jesus Christ] when he comes shall find so doing. The Lord [Jesus Christ] shall make him [the elect] ruler over all he has" (Lk.12:42-44 Para.).

Here, Jesus gives the keys to understanding what is required in order to be one of those who are blessed at his coming. The keys that will help to secure one's place in the first resurrection are faithfulness, wisdom, and perseverance in one's walk with God.

A Warning

"But if the servant [the elect] says in his heart, the Lord delays his coming [which all ten of the virgins did] and they begin to beat their fellow servants, and they eat and drink and get drunk. The Lord will come in the day when he is not looking for him, . . . and the Lord will cut him apart and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (Lk.12:45-46 Para.).

A person who becomes lazy in their walk with God, goes back into the world, or becomes abusive to others within the body of the elect will be cut off from God. This happened during the first age of the church and even some of those in leadership roles fell prey to this kind of attitude and behavior and began to abuse their brothers and sisters in Christ and to eat and drink with the drunken. This pictures sinful conduct that is associated with going back into the ways of the world. It is a sad fact that this type of sinful behavior can easily be found among the elect of God today.
Being cut asunder and being seen as an unbeliever alludes to the punishment in the Day of The Lord, when Christ will punish the unbelievers with severe trials of correction, which will often result in their death:

"That servant [one of the elect] who knew his lord's [the Father and Christ] will, and did not prepare, neither did his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But if he did not know [understand or was ignorant], and did things worthy of stripes he shall be beaten with few. For to whom much is given much is required..." (Lk.12:47-48 Para.).

The context of verses 47 and 48 concerns the difference between knowing and not knowing what one's responsibilities are before God the Father and Jesus Christ. Those who know what the will of God is for their lives and do not faithfully practice what they know to do will be severely punished by Jesus Christ. However, those who are ignorant of what is required will receive a lighter punishment because they have not set their will against God. Nevertheless, the ignorant servant does not receive a lighter punishment because he is guiltless of sin, but because he is not guilty of blatant and willful sin. Instead, he is guilty of being lazy and faithless in pursuit of the will of God in his life.

The point in verses 47-48 is that, as a called-out-one, the more a person knows about the will of God for their life, the greater the requirement is to do the will of God in a righteous and diligent manner. Whether a person has a great or a small amount of spiritual knowledge, they are expected to diligently pursue the Father's will in their lives.

Use Your Time Wisely

The following observations by William Barclay concisely state the necessity for those who believe they are followers of Christ to diligently seek and perform their heavenly Father's will in their life.

In The Daily Study Bible Series, The Gospel of Mark, Barclay says, "No man can tell the day or hour when eternity will invade time and the summons will come. We would like him to find us with our work completed. If we really know what Christianity means we will know that there is no part of life when the master is away. We are working and living forever in our great task master's eyes. There is nothing so fatal as to feel that we have plenty of time" (pp.167-168).

In The Daily Study Bible Series, Gospel of Matthew Volume II, Barclay observes, "The parable has two universal meanings, it warns us that there are certain things which cannot be obtained at the last minute. It is far too late for a student to be preparing when the day of the examination is come. It is too late for a man to acquire a skill or character if he does not already possess it. It warns us there are certain things which cannot be borrowed. A man cannot borrow a relationship with God, he must possess it for himself. We cannot always be living on a spiritual capital which others have amassed" (pp.320-321).
William Barclay's comments can easily be applied to the condition in which many people find themselves today. Many people think they have spiritual capital which they do not have. Many others think their association with those who seem to be righteous assures them of being in right-standing with God. However, they do not realize that they are bankrupt and are only playing church like the five foolish virgins.

The wise virgins wake up when they hear the midnight warning cry and quickly fill their lamps (the truth of God) with their reserve oil (they repent and begin to earnestly seek God). But the foolish virgins only bring with them what is in their lamp (i.e., their initial understanding of God's truth). They have not grown enough spiritually to have any reserve oil with which to keep their lamps burning. When the foolish virgins realize that Christ is about to come, they seek to make themselves ready by attempting to borrow from the five who had brought enough oil. Because they are foolish, they think they can get into the kingdom of God through the effort of someone else. The implication is that these people have a wrong attitude and want to do things their own way instead of seeking God's ways in a repentant attitude.

THE WEDDING BANQUET

"Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come, . . . and insulted and killed the messenger" (Matt.22:1-3, 6 Para.).

This parable was primarily aimed at the Jews of Jesus' day. But there is no doubt that it also applies to the end of the age when the Father will send an invitation to participate in the first resurrection and the wedding feast of his Son through his elect children. We also know that some of these messengers will be killed for delivering the Father's invitation.

"Then he said to his servants, The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited [the Jews of Jesus' day] did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find" (Matt.22:8-9 Para.).

Many people have been called to salvation throughout the centuries, since the Jews of Jesus' day rejected the Father's good news message. The scriptures indicate that, before Christ's return, vast numbers of people will be called to salvation (many will be invited to the wedding banquet).

"But when the king [Jesus Christ] came in to see the guests [those called to the first resurrection], he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless " (Matt.22:11-12 Para.).
This scripture is an extremely important warning for all who have been called to participate in the first resurrection and the wedding banquet of Christ to be spiritually prepared for the return of Christ.

During the time of Christ, when a person was invited to a prestigious wedding banquet and did not have fine enough clothing to attend, the person to be honored would provide the fine clothing. This is exactly what is done for those who are invited to participate in the first resurrection and the banquet that follows. God the Father removes our sinful clothing (Isa.64:6) and clothes us through the sacrifice of Christ with righteousness (Rev.3:5; 7:9-14) after which it is our responsibility to maintain this clothing of righteousness in a pure and sinless condition (1.Cor.1:1-8; 2.Pet.3:13-14) until we are allowed to enter the wedding banquet of Christ.

The man who tried to attend the wedding without proper clothing is symbolic of many who are called to salvation and are very excited at the prospect of being saved from eternal death and being given eternal and immortal life in the Kingdom of God. However, after accepting the invitation (they repent and are baptized), they do not prepare themselves through continued spiritual growth in grace and knowledge to be worthy to enter the Family and Kingdom of God. Because they have done very little with the opportunity that they have been given, they will have no excuse when Christ tells them that they have disqualified themselves from receiving eternal life:

"Then the king told the attendants, Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are invited, but few are chosen" (Matt.22:13-14 Para.).

Many have the attitude that they can enter the Family and Kingdom of God under their own terms and conditions and they disregard the clear instructions that are set forth in the Bible. These individuals try to get into the wedding banquet without meeting the standards for righteous attitudes and behaviors that must be maintained throughout one's life.

God the Father has invited many to the awesome calling of the first resurrection, but few ultimately are chosen to receive the reward, because so many reject his rule in their lives and are unwilling to put forth the time and effort to secure salvation.

THE GIVING OF TALENTS

"Watch because you do not know the day or the hour in which the Son man comes. Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability..." (Matt.25:13-15 Para.).
The master goes on the journey and comes back asking each of his servants to account for what they were given. The faithful servants show that they have in varying degrees increased the value of what they were given. However, one servant did not increase the value of what he was given:

"Then the man who received the one talent came. Master, he said, I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you" (Matt.22:24-25 Para.).

Notice what happens to the one who does nothing with the opportunity of salvation and the spiritual blessings and gifts that he has been given:

"His master [Jesus] replied, You wicked, lazy servant! You knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed [You understood what I was doing and yet you did nothing]. . . Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents . . . And throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt.22:26, 28-30 Para.).

When the Father calls an individual to salvation, that person has enough personal attributes to successfully secure salvation and a high position in his Family and Kingdom with the help of the holy spirit; otherwise, the Father would never have called that person. Therefore, the Father and Jesus Christ expect a person to grow in grace and knowledge and to produce spiritual fruit in their life. They also expect their servants to accomplish a work for them. If a person becomes too fearful and lazy to do this, they are not worthy to enter the Family and Kingdom of God.

The reward the unworthy servant should have received for faithful service was given to someone else who had seized the opportunity and was willing to produce for their master. This is a serious warning that a person called to salvation must make a personal effort to do what is necessary in order to enter the Father's Family and Kingdom.

AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

When Jesus was asked what the sign of his coming would be he says:

"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt.24:38-39 KJV).

The apostle Paul says much the same thing that Jesus does concerning the times that would exist just before Christ’s return:
"But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it" (2 Tim. 3:1-5, RSV).

On the surface, human behavior today seems to be much as it has been for centuries; however, this is not so. What Matthew and Paul record as great wickedness will be the behavior of people just before the return of Christ and evil behavior today is increasing exponentially. Extremely evil behavior is the norm and not the exception in today's world. The behavior of people today is the same as it was right before the great flood when God destroyed humanity for their wicked behavior. However, the conditions that exist in the world today are no excuse for the elect of God to forsake their calling.

One Taken, One Left

When the conditions of the world reach those of the times of Noah, Christ will return and collect the faithful. This is the context in which we see the two types of people who have been called to salvation:

"Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left" (Matt. 24:40-41 NIV).

The ones who are taken from this world at Christ's coming are symbolic of the righteous elect who are faithful to God's calling. The ones who are left are symbolic of those who are unfaithful and unworthy of eternal and immortal life in the Father's Family and Kingdom.

Being left on earth after the return of Christ and the first resurrection should be an extremely terrifying thing for the elect of God to contemplate. Because they are called to salvation during the gospel age, if they are not in the first resurrection, their fate is to be cast into the Lake of Fire, which is the second death:

"Therefore keep watch [action, vigilance, consistency], because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Matt. 24:42-44 NIV).
Who are the Faithful?

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, My master is staying away a long time, and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt.24: 45-51 NIV).

There are two groups of the elect being spoken of in the above scriptures. The first group seems to be those of the Philadelphia attitude that are likely the ones who are charged with proclaiming the gospel message—giving the midnight cry of warning—and are in charge of God's household under Christ during the end of the age. The second group seems to be those classified as the foolish and the wise virgins who are among the other six churches noted in chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation. Some of them will heed the midnight cry to repent and zealously secure their salvation, and some will not.

THE NARROW DOOR

"Someone asked him, Lord, are only a few people going to be saved? He said to them, Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, saying Sir, open the door for us. But he will answer, I don't know you or where you come from. Then you will say, We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets. But he will reply, I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers! There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out" (Lk.13:23-28 NIV).

This is another example of the rejection of spiritually lazy people who were personally called to salvation by the Father to become his immortal sons in his Family and Kingdom. In the final judgment, these foolish servants will be cast into the Lake of Fire for their sinful attitudes and behaviors.
God the Father and Jesus Christ are extremely fair and equitable in their treatment of the elect and they give each individual tremendous latitude and opportunity to be diligent and faithful. God the Father has never called a single person to be one of his elect children who was not equipped to meet the challenge and enter into his family. This is why the consequences for failure are so severe. The Father is not going to give the reward of eternal and immortal life to a person that rejects and disdains his call and refuses to be faithful to him and his son.

Individually, we need to be diligent servants who are energetic, dedicated, and faithful to this awesome and wonderful calling. There are only two choices for those who have been called to salvation during the gospel age: An individual can be lazy, unfaithful, and suffer the second death in the Lake of Fire, or one can be zealous and faithful, and be rewarded with eternal and immortal life in the Father's Family and Kingdom. If you have been called to salvation or are being called now, the choice of whether to live or die forever is yours!

By B.L. Cocherell and Charles E. Barrett
It is clear that Revelation, chapter 12 is written from the perspective of the end of the age shortly before the return of Christ to establish his Heavenly Father's government on earth. What is not so clear is the identity of the man-child to whom the woman gives birth and the identity of those spoken of as the remnant of her seed. Almost all commentaries on this subject say that the man-child and the remnant of her seed represent two different major events separated by an enormous amount of time. However, there is evidence that suggests these two events actually occur during the last few years before Christ's return.

The prophecy in chapter 12 seems to describe the following two groups of people:

1. A group of the Sovereign Father's earthly children who are rescued and protected from an attempt by Satan's religious and governmental system to destroy them.

2. A collective grouping of Sovereign Father's earthly children whom he allows to be persecuted by Satan and his religious and governmental system.

Before reviewing this prophecy in detail, it is necessary to read the entire 12th chapter in order to see that these verses most likely present a chronological order of events, which will take place shortly before and during the last 3½ years before Christ returns.

Revelation 12:1-17 KJV

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (v1)

"And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered" (v2).

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads" (v3).

"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born" (v4).
"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up to God, and to his throne" (v5).

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (v6).

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven" (vs.7-8).

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (v9).

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (v10).

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives to the death" (v11).

"Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time" (v12).

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child" (v13).

"And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent" (v14).

"And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood" (v15).

"And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth" (v16).

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (v17).
THE WOMAN AND THE CHILD

There are many great and awesome truths hidden in the symbolism of Revelation chapter 12, some of which will only be known to those who have and ear to hear what the spirit says to the churches.

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev.12:1 KJV).

The English word translated as woman in verse 1 is from the Greek word gune, which means a woman; especially, a wife. The woman seems to be is symbolic of the church as a collective entity, which is noted in the scriptures as the bride of Christ. See Matt.9:15; Mk.2:19-20; Jn.3:28-30.

The prophet Joel was inspired to record the following concerning the Day of the Lord and the Father's earthly children who are symbolically Christ's bride:

"Blow the shophar in Zion, observe a fast, call an assembly, gather the people together, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and even infants who are nursing. Call the bridegroom from his apartment and the bride from under her canopy" (Joel 2:15-16 Para.).

In his letter to the Elect at Rome about being dead to the penalty of the law, the apostle Paul uses the marriage contract as an example to show that the Elect are to be symbolically married to Christ:

"Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God" (Rom.7:4 KJV).

In the Revelation to John we also see Christ depicted as the bridegroom and the Father's earthly children depicted as his bride:

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev.19:7-8 KJV).

Beginning in Revelation, chapter 21, verse 9 and through verse 5 of chapter 22, John is shown the Sovereign Father's holy city which is inhabited by the elect who are symbolically the wife of Christ:

"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and spoke with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev.21:9). "And there shall be no night there; and they [the Father's children] need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev.22:5). See also Rev.22:16-17.
The Sun

The English word *sun* in verse 1 is translated from the Greek word *helios*, which means *the sun* and by implication, *light*. This could be symbolic of being clothed in the light (i.e., spiritual light, which is the understanding of God's truth and way of truth). Being clothed with the sun could also be symbolic of strength; thus, when the church is unified, it possesses enormous spiritual strength. However, the more logical explanation is that the sun is symbolic of Christ who is the giver of spiritual light to the church and is who is prophetically referred to as the sun by the prophet Malachi:

"For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But to you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness [Christ] arise with healing in his wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall" (Mal.4:1-2 KJV).

Christ the Illuminator

There are three text in the New Testament that clearly show Christ as the giver of spiritual light and specificity the spiritual light of the church:

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to be a witness of the Light [Christ], that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light [Christ]. That was the true Light [spiritual light], which lights every man that comes into the world. He [Christ] was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (Jn.1:6-10 KJV).

Notice that it is Christ who was the Creator God that made the world who is the spiritual light that illuminates the world with spiritual light. During Christ's ministry he confirmed that he was indeed the one sent by the Sovereign God to give spiritual light:

"Then Jesus spoke again to them again, saying, I am the light [i.e., spiritual light] of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light [spiritual understanding, the presence of Christ within, and eternal life]" (Jn.8:12 Para.).

"I [Christ] must work the works of him [the Sovereign God] that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn.9:4-5 KJV). See also Jn.12:35-36.

Those who are truly the Sovereign Father's earthly children are also called a light. Notice what Christ said to his disciples and what the apostle Paul said to the church at Thessalonica and Ephesus:
"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt.5:14-16 KJV).

The Sovereign Father's earthly children as spiritual lights, are to proclaim his awesome plan through Christ for the salvation of mankind and warn the world to pay attention to what is revealed in order to avoid the second death from which there is no return.

"But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1.Thess.5:4-5 KJV).

"For you were sometimes darkness, but now you are light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness [spiritual darkness], but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever does make manifest is light. Wherefore he says, Awake you that sleeps, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light" (Eph.5:8-14 KJV).

Notice again that the Elect are spiritual lights who understand things of the spirit and that it is Christ who is the giver of this spiritual insight and understanding. It is through the spiritual light of Christ that the Sovereign Father's earthly children are to illuminate the world with the Father's good news message of salvation, his truth, and his way of truth.

The Moon

The English word moon is translated from the Greek word selene, which is derived from the word selas (brilliance; through the idea of attractiveness), which means the moon.

The Hebrew word for moon literally means the wanderer. The prophecies show the Sovereign Father's children in the end of the age as having an understanding of his truth and way of truth, being fragmented in organization, and scattered throughout the world.

With the understanding that the elect during the end of the age are scattered throughout the earth and that Christ illuminates the church with spiritual light and the church is to illuminate the world with spiritual light, it makes sense that the moon under the woman's feet is symbolic of the Sovereign Father's truth and way of truth that is being reflected to the inhabitants of the earth through the woman who is symbolic of the scattered elect who comprise the church.
The Crown of Stars

An important point is that the crown worn by the woman is not a crown with twelve stars, but a crown composed of twelve stars; the crown itself is twelve stars.

The English word crown in verse 1 of Revelation, chapter 12 is from the Greek word stephanos, which can mean a wreath worn on the head as a badge of royalty, a prize for someone who is victorious in an athletic event, or a symbol of honor.

The crown that the woman wears is easily symbolic of both royalty and victory, because those of the Father's earthly family are presently his royal priesthood and kings within his holy nation. Moreover, those who live in harmony with the Father are victorious over sin.

The Sovereign Father's earthly children who gain victory over their human nature will be crowned with many things after Christ returns, including a crown of righteousness, immortal life, and glory. See 2.Tim.4:8; Jms.1:12; 1.Pet.5:4; 1.Jn.5:1-4; Rev.4:4, 15:2.

The Twelve Stars

The symbolic meaning of the twelve-star crown upon the head of the woman could easily refer to the twelve apostles, the twelve tribes of national Israel (spiritually) and/or the twelve symbols in the Zodiac in the heavens, which picture the sequence of God's entire plan for the salvation of mankind.

All of this symbolism can easily apply to the collective church, because it is the collective body of the Father's earthly children who are his witnesses for his plan for the salvation of mankind and his truth and way of truth. Moreover, it is his children who will implement the next phase of his plan for the salvation of mankind through national Israel after Christ returns.

Although a number of scriptures tell us that the glory of the Father's children is to be as stars (Dan.12:3; Matt.14,33), more than likely the stars represent the twelve apostles to whom Christ promised to set on thrones over the tribes of Israel (Matt.19:28; Lk.22:28-30).

The sun, the woman, the crown of stars, and the moon are not only prophetic of the future ordered structure through which the heavenly Father's eternal truth and way of truth will be proclaimed to mankind but also the method through which mankind is presently being shown the Father's eternal truth and way of truth.

The Messiah who is the head, the caretaker, and the spiritual illuminator of his Father's earthly family and holy nation is illuminating the church with God's truth and way of truth. And the church as a spiritual light to the world are reflecting the spiritual light to the world like the sun's light is reflected by the moon.
Remember that Christ said, *The night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world*" (Jn.9:4-5 KJV). This prophecy speaks to a time at the end of this age when the work of the Father's earthy children is finished and the spiritual light reflected through them ceases to illuminate the world. When this happens the world in plunged into total spiritual darkness and the full wrath of God is poured out on those who have refused to pay attention to the warning from the Sovereign Father's children of spiritual light.

**The Woman Gives Birth**

Verses 1 to 3 of the first chapter of the Book of Revelation show that the things revealed in these prophecies will come to pass quickly and that the time of their fulfillment is near. Moreover, Jesus could not have been this man-child because he was born long before this revelation. This means that these prophecies had not yet been fulfilled at the time they were revealed to John. Therefore, the *man-child* could not have been born before this prophecy was given to John.

Because the majority of the prophecies in the Book of Revelation will be fulfilled a few years before Christ returns, we can assume that the birth of the *man-child* must also occur shortly before the return of Christ. 

"And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered" (Rev.12:2 KJV).

Verse 2 reveals the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy as the end of the age; in that, the collective church of the gospel age of salvation (the body of Christ) has travailed for centuries waiting for the time of the end when it would be empowered by God to help close the final chapters of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. See Dan.11:31-35; Mic.5:3; Jn.14:12-14; Rev.11:1-6.

Although biblical prophecy indicates that the entire church will be proclaiming the Sovereign Father's true good news message during the end of the age, it seems clear that the *man-child* to be born of the woman comes out of the empowered portion of the church that will go forth to proclaim the Father's message of good news to the world. The only people who seem to be empowered in a major way to proclaim the gospel just before Christ's return are those who are called the Philadelphia church in Revelation 3:7.

**The Promise To Philadelphia**

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things say he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens" (Rev.3:7).

The individual in this prophecy who has the key of David has absolute authority over its use and the door which it opens like the prophetic Eliakim noted in Isaiah 22:15-25.
Revelation, chapter 3, verse 8 seems to show that the Church of Philadelphia represents a grouping of the Sovereign Father's earthly children who are to do a great work in the end of the age, and that it is Christ who has the key to open to them the knowledge and power they will need to do this great work.

Christ says the following to the Church of Philadelphia in verse 8:

"I know your works: behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name" (Rev.3:8).

The English word translated as *man* in verse 8 is from the Greek word *oudeis*, which does not mean a man in Greek. The Greek word for man is *anthropos* (man-faced, i.e., a human being). *Oudeis* means *none* nobody, or *nothing*.

The English word *strength* in verse 8 is translated from the Greek word *dunamis*, which means *force* (literally or figuratively); specifically, it means *miraculous power* (usually by implication, a miracle itself).

Christ specifically says that, at the time the open door is set before them, the Church of Philadelphia has little force (i.e., miraculous power). Historically, this has been the condition of the entire collective church since the demise and disappearance of the early church as a powerful unified entity.

The inference in verse 8 is that, because of their small amount of spiritual power, the Church of Philadelphia cannot open this door on their own. However, when this door is opened for them, absolutely nothing can shut it except Christ.

**The Red Dragon**

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth . . ." (Rev.12:3-4 KJV).

Many scriptures show that, after the dragon (Satan the Devil) comes to earth with the evil spirits who serve him, he will establish an alliance of nations called the Beast. Because the seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns symbolize Satan's spiritual and physical empire, we can safely assume that verses 3 and 4 take place either during Satan's effort to establish the Beast alliance of nations or very shortly after it has already been established. See Dan.7:7,19, 23-24 and Rev.13:1-2.

"And his tail [Satan] drew the third part of the stars of heaven, . . ." (Rev.12:4 KJV).

Stars are often symbolic of the angels. In this verse, the stars refer to the evil spirits who are under the authority of Satan. Notice that Satan caused a third of all the angels to leave their heavenly habitation and forces them to the earth.
This event occurs before the woman (the church) gives birth to the man-child and before the war in heaven that is spoken of in verse 7, which results in evil spirits being forced to earth by Satan.

"And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born" (Rev. 12:4 KJV).

This event occurs between the time Satan gathers the rebellious spirit-beings under his control and forces them to earth in preparation to do his bidding and the time of the war that occurs as he attempts to regain access to the Sovereign Father's heavenly realm.

We are not told what task the woman's child is being born to perform. But, Satan clearly wants to stop the man-child before he can begin to perform this task. If the man-child's task is to proclaim the true gospel or to help prepare the collective church to rule the earth, it is understandable that Satan would want to stop this from happening, because when the true gospel has been proclaimed to the world, Satan will be removed as the ruler of this earth and lose his freedom for a thousand years prior to being destroyed by fire. See Rev.20:7-10; Ezk.28:18-19.

According to the Book of Revelation, the major persecution upon the Sovereign Father's earthly children will begin to occur shortly after they and the Two Witnesses begin to proclaim the true gospel message accompanied by great signs and wonders.

The Mysterious Man-Child

"And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up to God, and to his throne" (Rev. 12:5 KJV).

Most have been taught that the birth of the man-child in verse 5 is speaking of the birth of Jesus Christ; however, this cannot be so, because this prophecy is clearly meant for the time just a few years prior to his return as conquering King. Verse 5 has nothing to do with the personage of Jesus Christ, but it has everything to do with a key individual who has a very important task to perform just prior to Christ's return.

Because of the brevity of the information about the man-child, it is difficult to make any concrete statement about his identity, function, or mission. This should not come as a surprise, because there are a number of individuals who have been foreordained to perform certain tasks in the end of the age who are noted in the prophecies without having their tasks fully explained. See Hag.2:23; Zech.6:9-15. What is clear is that this individual will know what he is to do and that his appearance on the world scene foreshadows the end of human rule on earth.
Most likely, the prophecy concerning the man-child will not be fully understood until it has been fulfilled or until God deems it necessary for his saints to understand it. Although Christ promised that the holy spirit will guide, teach, and reveal future events, there is a long list of prerequisites that must be in place before the holy spirit will perform these functions. Moreover, no time frame is indicated as to when one will be guided into an understanding of prophetic events.

A notable prophecy at the end of Daniel tells us that some truth is sealed until the end and that it is the wise who will understand. If, as many believe, the wise are all of the elect, what kind of wisdom are six of the seven churches noted in the Book of Revelation exhibiting? Clearly, not all of the elect will understand everything about prophecy or the deep things of God's word while they are in the flesh. Moreover, not all of God's children need to understand all prophecy in order to obtain salvation.

From the tone of the New Testament, the apostles and the early church thought early on that Christ would return within their lifetime, but they later understood that he would not. The point is that we are only allowed to understand what we need to understand at the time we need to. Most likely, the identity of the man-child is in the category of prophecies that will be revealed to those who need to understand them at that specific time.

Note:

The man-child is only shown to be taken to God and his throne. There is no mention of his being returned to earth; therefore, we can only speculate about anything concerning the man-child after he is taken up to heaven. Keep this in mind when reading the following.

The 24 Elders

Revelation 4:4-11 and 5:1-11 picture an event that may be similar to Paul's experience. One thing that makes this event especially interesting from the perspective of the church during the end of the age is that the 24 who are before the throne of God are called elders, have crowns, and are dressed in white. The English word elder is translated from the Greek word presbuteros, which is never used to describe a spirit-being; it is always used in the Bible to describe men who are in positions of leadership. These men in white (symbolic of righteousness) have crowns (symbolic of authority) and are redeemed (purchased and saved) from among men by the blood of the Lamb (Jesus Christ).

Perhaps Revelation chapters 4 and 5, picture 24 spiritual leaders of God's people at the throne of God in the same manner as the apostle Paul being caught up to paradise—to God's throne—where he heard some remarkable things that he was not allowed to repeat (See 2.Cor.12:2-4).
Although the 24 elders are spoken of before the first four seals are shown to be opened, this event concerning the 24 elders fits well into the chronological order of the end of the age, because it seems to occur just before the sealing of the elect of God for their protection from the events that will follow the opening of the seventh seal.

One must remember that the things which are shown in the Book of Revelation are in a vision. Although some of these events seem to be without a consistent chronological flow of events as they progress toward Christ's return, some of these events clearly follow each other. Therefore, it is likely that the first four seals and their riders have been open and active since the demise of the early church. And the events that their opening caused will intensify as Christ opens other seals. See the section concerning the Four Horsemen for a detailed explanation of the first four seals.

It is also possible that the 24 elders have something to do with the structure of the church in the end of the age. If so, the vision of them being before God the Father and Jesus Christ seems to have something to do with their being given spiritual insight and knowledge. This was done with the apostle Paul to help him carry out his responsibilities in preaching the gospel and ministering to the elect of God. If Revelation, chapters 4 and 5 give information about events surrounding the future church leadership, these 24 elders may also be very instrumental in doing the greater work that Jesus said will be done just before his return (Jn. 14:12).

The 1,260 Days

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days [3½ years]" (Rev. 12:6 KJV).

Because the woman is symbolic of the collective church, it seems that those who personify the church are the ones whom Christ will protect from Satan (Rev. 3:10-11). Remember it is the Philadelphia church and/or its spiritual leader(s) whom Christ empowers and for whom he opens a door so they can proclaim his Father's good news message to the world (See Isa. 22:22).

The English phrase they should feed her in verse 6 is translated from the Greek word τρεφοσιν, which does not imply an entity (i.e., "they"), it seems to simply set forth the idea of being nourished or sustained during that time.

From the warning to the seven churches in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, it seems safe to assume that the woman's male child comes forth from the seventh church that escapes to the wilderness. The wilderness is symbolic of a place or a condition of refuge where these elect of God are to be cared for during the last 3½ years before Christ returns. This empowered grouping of the elect will be protected (given refuge) during this 3½ years while they carry out their task of proclaiming the gospel.
While the worthy individuals of the church are being protected, the other six-sevenths of the church are being punished by Jesus Christ and persecuted by the Antichrist in order to bring them to true repentance and salvation.

**War In Heaven**

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels [his demons] were cast out with him" (Rev.12: 7-9 KJV).

Verses 7 through 9 seem to be tied to the events in verses 3 and 4; in that, the evil spirits under Satan's control are a part of a war shown in verse 4 that will occur in the dimension of time and space known as heaven between the forces of good and evil. During this war, the great red dragon (Satan the Devil) is defeated and cast out of heaven along with the millions of evil spirit-beings under his control.

**The Ones Who Overcome**

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them . . . " (Rev.12:10-12 KJV).

When this announcement is made, human rule on earth is about to come to an end and the Kingdom of God is about to be established in Jerusalem (Psa.72:8-11). The voice also states that it is the blood of Christ that empowers one to overcome Satan.

"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child" (Rev.12:12-13 KJV).

Satan is angry because he no longer has access to the Sovereign Father's realm of existence, which means that he has but a short time before he will be punished for his rebellion against God. Because he has been denied what he wants and is about to be punished for his disobedience, he comes to earth in a rage to take out his anger on God's physical creation and the church that gave birth to the man-child.
"And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time [3½ years], from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth" (Rev.12:14-16 KJV).

Those of the collective church who are faithful to God and worthy to come under his protection are taken to a place where they are protected and cared for. We are not told where this part of the church is taken or how she is protected; we are just told that it will be done.

How does Satan persecute the church? He persecutes the church through those whom he influences and controls as part of his religions and political systems.

The flood may symbolize the civil and religious authorities and/or the military arm of the Beast alliance of nations. Satan sends forth this flood (a great number of people) to destroy the elect of God; however, the earth (perhaps a cataclysmic event or perhaps other people) help the elect to escape whatever or whoever is sent to destroy them. It is at this point in history that Satan will have lost his power to harm this particular group of people who symbolize the purity and righteousness of the collective church.

The Remnant

"And the dragon was angry with the woman [the church], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev.12:17 KJV).

There is a clear distinction between the woman, her male child, and the rest of her children. This is yet another proof that the woman represents the collective church—the physical and spiritual source from which the elect spring (See Gal.4:26). It is clear from many scriptures that a few of the woman's children will be found worthy of her protective care, but the rest of her children are worthy of punishment at the hands of Satan.

Because Satan will have been frustrated in his attempt to destroy those who speak out against him and his religions and governmental systems as they proclaim God the Father's good news message with great power, he will turn his attention toward those of the church who are left unprotected.

There are a great number of individuals who are considered to be the Sovereign Father's children during these end of the age events who are not found worthy of being protected by Christ. These individuals will suffer great persecution at the hands of Satan and his servants for 3½ years before Christ returns.
The six prophetic groupings of the Sovereign Father's earthly children who are symbolized by the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 as needing to repent of their sinful attitudes and behaviors. These will be tried by the fire of persecution in order to bring them to repentance and save them from the second death.

**Philadelphia To Accomplish A Great Work**

There are a number of very important things spoken of in Revelation 12:7-17 that dramatically affect all of the Sovereign Father's earthly children during the last 3½ years before Christ's return:

1. The events described in Revelation 12:1-17 concern the collective church that will exist in the last 3½ years prior to Christ's return. The focal point seems to be the Philadelphia grouping of the elect of God and how Satan attacks them but is not allowed to overpower them, because the Philadelphia grouping of the elect are protected in order to accomplish a great work for God.

   The primary mission of the Philadelphia grouping is to proclaim the Father's good news of salvation through Jesus Christ and to help usher in a time of enormous conversions all over the world, particularly among the Abrahamic peoples of the earth.

2. Satan comes to earth in great anger and will take out this anger upon humanity because he knows that he is about to lose his freedom and be punished for his great wickedness and rebellion against God.

3. When Satan becomes aware that he is no longer allowed to enter God's dimension of existence, he begins to take out his anger on God the Father's elect who have his spirit residing within them and refuse to worship Satan as a god.

**PERSECUTION FOR 3½ YEARS**

In the Books of Daniel and Revelation there are some very specific things said about the last 3½ years of persecution that will come upon the elect of God as they proclaim the true gospel message.

**War With The Elect Of God**

"And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Dan.7: 20-22 KJV).
This prophecy recorded by Daniel shows a powerful dictatorial religious/governmental system, which is guided and empowered by evil spirits coming into existence during the time of the end. This extremely evil and powerful entity wages war against God the Father's earthly children and conquers some of them; however, this apparent victory is only temporary because these individuals return with Jesus Christ and the heavenly host and destroy this religious/governmental system:

"And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given to him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Rev.13:5-7 KJV).

During the time of the end, God the Father's earthly children are engaged in an ongoing battle with evil spirits and evil humans while proclaiming the only true gospel message. Moreover, the elect are announcing that the Kingdom of the true God is coming to destroy and replace Satan's system of religion and government, which is identified in the Book of Revelation as the Beast.

"This he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out [i.e., afflict mentally] the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Dan.7:23-25 KJV).

This religious/governmental system is different from all others that have come before it and has more influence and power than any religious, political, or governmental system that has ever existed on earth. Moreover, it exerts its tremendous influence and power over the whole earth as it seeks to eliminate all worship of the true God.

"And forces shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that makes desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white [righteous], even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." (Dan.11: 31-35 KJV Para.).
A few years before Christ returns a temple will exist at Jerusalem for the worship of the Creator God. Here the sacrificial system will be performed in accordance with God's first covenant with national Israel. It is important to understand that these events will take place in the end of the age when the true gospel message is being proclaimed with great power. It is during this 3½ years that great persecution will come upon God the Father's earthly children.

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of your people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan.12:1 KJV).

Daniel is told that during this period of time there will be trouble the likes of which have never been seen before and will never be seen again. This is a time of unimaginable mental distress upon people and tremendous physical destruction upon the earth.

Those who are righteous like Daniel will be saved. However, being saved does not necessarily mean that one will be spared from all persecution or the effects of the physical devastation that is to come upon the earth during this time. What is clear from the scriptures is that those who are faithful to God's calling will be spared from the second death and enter into God the Father's divine Family and Kingdom as his dear children:

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan.12:2 KJV).

Verse 2, speaks of two distinct types of resurrections. One that is to eternal/immortal life and one that is to the second death (i.e., eternal death).

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan.12:3-4 KJV).

Daniel is told that the wise (the righteous) will receive an everlasting reward in the Kingdom of God and that what he has been told will take place during the time of the end of human rule when there is a tremendous increase in physical and spiritual knowledge.

"Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river. How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" (Dan.12:5-6 KJV).
Notice that the being standing in the midst of the river is asked how long these events will last. The answer is that this time of trouble will last 3½ years (see Rev.12:7), because it will take this long for the following things to be accomplished:

- The proclaiming of the Sovereign Father's true good news message by his earthly children.
- The pouring out of God's wrath upon humanity for their refusal to repent and come under his rule peacefully.
- The stopping by Satan of the great work being conducted by the Sovereign Father's earthly children.

"And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by him that lives for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished" (Dan. 12:7 KJV). See also Rev.13:5-7.

At the end of the 3½ years of persecution, Jesus Christ will come with his holy angels and collect those who have remained faithful to God's calling throughout their lives. He will then return to heaven with the elect of all ages to make preparation for his return to conquer the earth and establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

By B.L. Cocherell
CHAPTER TEN

THE THIRD ELIJAH

One of the major prophecies about the end of the age just before the return of Jesus Christ concerns the coming of the third Elijah. Although most Bible students have read about the prophet Elijah, the office of Elijah, and the prophetic coming of Elijah, few understand that he plays a significant role in preaching the gospel.

The following are the three basic theories as to who the third Elijah will be:

1. Elijah will be a prophet selected from among the elect of God to proclaim the gospel message and perform a work similar to the work of the original Elijah.
2. Elijah is an office, which will be performed by the Sovereign Father's elect as a collective work to proclaim his message to the world.
3. The ancient prophet Elijah will be resurrected by God to proclaim the coming of the Messiah.

There are no examples in the Bible of a prophet of ancient Israel being brought back from the dead to begin a public ministry. So it is unlikely that this precedent would change. Because both the first and second Elijah were real people who did an individual work, it seems unlikely that this precedent would be changed. Therefore, this study focuses on the possibility of the third Elijah being a real person who is selected by God for a special task before Christ returns.

THE MESSENGER

Along with a strong warning for all Israelites to repent, return to God, and begin to worship him in truth, the prophet Malachi was inspired to record many major events that would occur just prior to Christ's return. One of these events was the sending of a messenger to prepare the way for this return:

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness" (Mal.3:1-3 NIV).
Malachi’s prophecy contains information about when and how Christ will return. When the messenger has completed his task, Jesus Christ will come very quickly to his temple. Because he will come to his temple, it should be clear that the sending of the third Elijah depends on the events right before and during the existence of a temple in Jerusalem for the worship of the true God. Moreover, Jesus will return as a refiner of metal, which means he will come with great power and wrath to purge his people and the earth of evil before establishing his Father's government and worship system in Jerusalem:

"Behold I am sending you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction" (Mal.4:5-6 Para.).

We are not told how long before the day of the Lord that this Elijah will be sent, or how long his ministry will last. We are only told that he will be sent before this time, and that he is charged with preaching a message of repentance and restoration of the faith once delivered. He is sent to preach this message in order to convince people to return to God, so that God will not completely destroy the earth.

There can be no doubt that the third Elijah has an extremely important responsibility and mission concerning the return of Christ and the survival of humanity. Clearly, the third Elijah is the messenger who is sent to prepare the way for Christ's return and perform a great spiritual work of the restoration of truth.

THE FIRST TWO ELIJAHS

In order to recognize the third Elijah and understand the impact that he will have upon the Jews, the ten tribes of Israel, and the world's inhabitants, it is necessary to review the lives and ministries of Elijah the Tishbite and Elijah in the person of John the Baptist.

THE FIRST ELIJAH

The first Elijah was a prophet to the house of Israel during the reigns of King Ahab (874-854 B.C.), his son Ahaziah (853-852 B.C.), and the beginning of Joram's reign in 852 B.C.. He was also a prophet to the house of Judah sometime after 848 B.C.:

"And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in these years, except at my word" (1.Kgs.17:1 Para.).
Elijah is one of the most dynamic men in the entire Bible, yet in this first mention of him, he is merely introduced as Elijah the Tishbite, an inhabitant of Gilead. As a Tishbite he was from Tishbe, a village in Gilead east of the Jordan River, which was the area originally given to Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. This is all of the background information that is given about the original Elijah.

The scriptures do not tell us anything about Elijah’s lineage or bloodline, or if he was even an Israelite. However, it seems logical that he was an Israelite because of the importance of his mission to Israel and the negative attitude of Israelites toward non-Israelites at that time.

**Elijah Punishes Israel**

Through God, Elijah the Tishbite caused a drought in Israel to punish the Israelites for worshiping false gods and to punish King Ahab for allowing Israel to become paganized.

"After a long time, in the third year [third year of drought], the word of the Lord came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land." So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria" (1.Kgs.18:1-2 NIV).

Three years after Elijah caused a drought in Israel, God sent him to tell king Ahab to repent. Because it was no secret who had caused the drought and why he had caused it, one would think that Ahab would have known that his actions were not acceptable to God, and that God was punishing him because he was allowing Israel to become paganized. However, the first thing Ahab did was accuse Elijah of being a troublemaker:

"So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you trouble of Israel?" "I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed Baalism" (1.Kgs. 18:16-18).

Elijah tells Ahab that his departure from the way of God is the reason for the drought and famine. Elijah brought a very clear message to the civil leader of Israel concerning his and Israel's sins before God and the subsequent punishment for their wicked and rebellious behavior.

Ancient Israel and its leaders had a proclivity to forget God's laws, precepts, and principles and to accept and worship false gods. Today, the same situation exists among the Israelitish peoples; they have forgotten their God and are steeped in many different worship systems that are in opposition to God the Father and Jesus Christ.
God’s Instrument Against Evil

"Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, [850 pagan prophets and priests] who eat at Jezebel's table" (1.Kgs.18:19 Para.).

At Mount Carmel, with Ahab and 850 pagan prophets and priests present, Elijah tells them to prepare a sacrifice and ask their gods to show that they are true by consuming the sacrifice. After many hours of incantations, crying, yelling, leaping, dancing, and cutting their flesh in order to get their gods to respond, their sacrifices remained untouched.

When it was evident that the pagan prophets and priests had failed to summon their gods, Elijah prepared a simple rock altar, placed the wood and bullock on it, and had four barrels of water poured on the whole thing. After all of this preparation, Elijah asked God to show these people that he was the true God and that he had sent him to say and do the things that he did:

"And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the sacrifice, that Elijah came near and said, Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me: and this people shall know that you are the Lord God, and that you shall turn their hearts back again. And fire fell from the Lord God and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones and the dust, and the water that was in the trench was licked up by it. And the people saw, and fell on their faces, and said, The Lord, he is God! the Lord he is God!" (1.Kgs.18:36-39 Para.).

With a demonstration of great power, God showed his acceptance of Elijah’s offering. God also showed that when Elijah asked something of him, he would take action to fulfill his request. Elijah had a tremendous amount of authority and power from God, which he could use at his discretion for the purpose of turning the Israelites away from evil and toward righteousness.

"Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal [all these religious leaders, all 850 of them]. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered them there" (1.Kgs.18:40 NIV).

Elijah did not hesitate to use his authority and power as a prophet of God to punish wicked and rebellious behavior in order to proclaim the message of repentance that God had given him. He aggressively reprimanded both civil and religious leaders who were in opposition to the true God and he eliminated those he perceived as a threat to his mission. See 2.Kgs.1:1-12.
Selected by God

From what is recorded about Elijah, it is clear that God selected him as a prophet and communicated directly with him. At Mount Carmel, Elijah announced that his authority and power to do the things that he did came from the Creator God. Moreover, one of Elijah's responsibilities was proclaiming God's message of repentance, so God could turn the Israelites from paganism to his teachings.

Elijah the Miracle Worker

Elijah had a very powerful ministry and worked many miracles through the awesome power that God gave him. The following are some of those miracles:

1. He caused the rain to cease for three and a half years.
2. He caused it to rain after three and a half years of drought.
3. He created food as an act of mercy.
4. He resurrected a dead child as a very special blessing.
5. Fire consumed his offering as a display of his authority from God.
6. He caused fire to consume two different groups of soldiers that came to arrest him.
7. He parted the Jordan River at the completion of his active ministry in Israel.

Where Did Elijah Go?

After Elijah had finished his primary work in Israel, he was sent to the house of Judah to continue his ministry as a prophet. It was then that Elisha assumed the responsibility as prophet to Israel.

A Letter From Elijah

After Elijah left Israel, he sent a letter to king Jehoram whose reign began in 848 B.C. This letter stated that punishment would come upon Jehoram and the nation of Judah for their wickedness and rebellion against God:

"Also, he had made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the people of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and led astray Judah. And a writing came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying. So says the Lord, the God of your father David, Because you have not walked in the ways of your father Jehoshaphat, and in the ways of Asa the king of Judah, and you walk in the way of the kings of Israel, and caused Judah and the people of Jerusalem to commit fornication like the fornications of the house of Ahab; and also you have killed your brothers, the house of your father, who were better than yourself; behold the Lord shall strike with a great destruction among your people, and among your sons, and among all your goods; and you, with many sicknesses, with disease in your bowels, until your bowels come out because of the sickness, day by day" (2.Chron.21:11-15 Para.).
Elijah’s letter to King Jehoram shows that after Elijah’s departure from Israel in a fiery chariot, he was still alive and actively preaching a message of repentance to the covenant people.

THE SECOND ELIJAH—JOHN THE BAPTIST

"In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly" (Lk. 1:5-6 NIV).

John’s mother was of the Aaronic bloodline and his father was a priest of the course of Abijah, which means that he was also of the Aaronic bloodline. Therefore, both of the parents of John the Baptist were of the tribe of Levi.

Selected by God

Before John was born, his father was told that he would have a son, and that this son would herald the coming of the Messiah who would bring salvation to the world.

"He will be a joy and a delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. . . and he will be filled with the holy spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk. 1:14-17 NIV).

John was selected before his conception to announce the advent of the Messiah. He was also chosen to turn the hearts of the people to righteousness, just as the first Elijah did.

"And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest [God the Father]: for you shall go before the face of the Lord [Jesus Christ] to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins. . . To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lk. 1:76-77, 79 KJV). See also Matt. 1:18-22.

John the Baptist was a representative of God the Father, whereas the first Elijah was a representative of the Creator God who became the Messiah. This is an important understanding, because the third Elijah will represent and have authority and power from both God the Father and Jesus Christ.
John's Mission

"As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before my face, which shall prepare your way before you. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mk.1:2-3 KJV). See also Isa.40:3-5; Matt.11:7-10; Lk.3:2-4.

John's mission was to lay the foundation for God the Father's messenger (the Messiah) to build upon. John was to make the announcement of the coming message and the messenger and to set the boundaries of the message that the messenger would give—"make his paths straight." Therefore, John's message contained the foundational elements of the things that Jesus Christ would teach, such as repentance, forgiveness of sin, baptism, and the Kingdom of God:

"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission [pardon or deliverance] of sins" (Mk.1:4 KJV).

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea. And saying, Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt.3:1-2 KJV).

Jesus did not deviate from the message that John announced that he would proclaim. From the beginning to the end of his ministry, Jesus explained in great detail the things that concern repentance, pardon of sin, baptism, and the Kingdom of God.

THE WORD AND THE LIGHT

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him [The Word, The Logos]; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (Jn.1:1-5 KJV).

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world" (Jn.1:6-9 KJV).

The apostle John clearly says that Jesus was the Light of God who came to illuminate the world with spiritual insight, and that John the Baptist was the one who God sent to prepare the way for the coming of the Light (i.e., Jesus Christ).
Religious Leaders

"But when he [John the Baptist] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees [the religious ruling class and those who were priests] coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham" (Matt.3:7-9 NIV).

When John tells these religious leaders that they need to repent, he knows that they think they are righteous because they look to the teachings of the Patriarchs (the spiritual fathers of Israel). This is why John says what he does about their reliance on Abraham. He tells them that they cannot rely on Abraham for their salvation.

A Great Man

"Jesus said of John the Baptist, what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you. I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt.11:9-11 Para.).

John was a great man. He had impeccable character and performed a great work for God. The birth and ministry of John the Baptist was the second most important birth and ministry that has ever happened on earth, because John made the announcement of the coming of the Messiah who would reveal and proclaim the good news from God the Father.

How did John the Baptist prepare the way for the first advent of Jesus? John made the announcement of the coming of the Messiah to redeem humanity. Among other things, John's message contained the foundational elements of the things that Jesus Christ would teach, such as repentance, forgiveness of sin, baptism, and the Kingdom of God.

MISSIONS OF THE FIRST TWO ELIJAH'S

Some significant differences between the missions of Elijah and John the Baptist are as follows:

- Elijah was sent primarily to the house of Israel. John was sent primarily to the house of Judah.
- Elijah called for the civil and religious leadership and the people of Israel to repent and worship the true God. John called for the Jews and their religious leaders to repent, worship the true God, and prepare to receive the Messiah.
• Elijah was authorized to use God's great power and he used it to work many miracles. John worked no miracles.
• Elijah did not preach the coming Kingdom of God. John preached about the coming Kingdom of God.

The following are some of the similarities between the missions of Elijah and John the Baptist:
• Both preached the adherence to the laws, precepts, and principles of God.
• Both preached repentance and a return to the faith once delivered.
• Both came to restore God's worship system to what it was when it was originally given to the Israelites at Mount Sinai.
• Both had limited success in convincing people to repent and worship the true God.

THE THIRD ELIJAH
Why Elijah Must Come

The disciples were well versed in the prophecies as many of their day were; however, they did not understand them. They knew that the prophet Malachi foretold that God would send Elijah before the advent of the Messiah, which is the reason for their question concerning Elijah:

"And his disciples asked him, 'Why do the Scribes say that Elijah must come first? Jesus replied, Elijah truly will come first and restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him what ever they wanted to do. Likewise shall the Son of Man suffer at their hands. Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist" (Matt.17:10-13 Para.). See also Matt.11:10-14; Mk.9:11-13.

Jesus clearly says that John the Baptist was the prophetic Elijah who was to come before the Messiah. When he says, "Elijah truly will come first and restore all things," Jesus reveals that Malachi's prophecy concerns yet another Elijah to come after John the Baptist. The reason another Elijah must come is that John the Baptist did not come to restore anything; however, when the third Elijah comes he will be involved in the restoration of all things, but what are these things that he will restore?

The Prophecy

The only clear prophecies concerning Elijah's ministry during the time just prior to Christ's return as Lord of lords and King of kings are found in the prophecies of Malachi and Matthew:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. . ." (Mal.3:1 KJV).
"Behold I am sending you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction" (Mal.4:5-6 Para.).

"And Jesus replied, Elijah truly will come first and restore all things" (Matt.17:11 Para.).

Within these three prophecies are the keys to understanding the ministry of Elijah during the end of the age. Notice that he will prepare the way before Christ's return, and that he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons and the sons to the fathers.

The Fathers and the Sons

The prophetic reference to fathers and sons by Malachi is a reference to the fathers who taught the truth of God: the Patriarchs, Moses, the Aaronic priesthood, and later, the Apostles. The sons are a reference to those who are taught the righteous ways of God through these teachers of righteousness.

The Things to be Restored

The prophetic reference by Jesus of the restoration of all things is a reference to the restoration of God's worship system. The restoration of God's worship system includes the sacrifices and Jesus' teachings concerning the salvation of humanity and the spiritual relationship between God the Father and his elect children.

The message of the third Elijah is centered around the restoration of the truth of God. Therefore, we should expect the third Elijah to restore an understanding of how the worship system that God instituted at Mount Sinai and the worship system that Jesus Christ instituted at Jerusalem work together in the salvation of any who will believe and worship God the Father in truth.

When these two aspects of the Father's worship system are restored and understood in the light of his plan for the salvation of humanity and are believed by those whom he calls to salvation, it can truly be said that the hearts of the fathers are turned to the sons and the sons to the fathers, because belief in and adherence to God's true worship system results in a return to a harmonious relationship between the fathers who taught righteousness (i.e., the Patriarchs, Moses, Aaron, the Apostles, and others) and the sons (i.e., those who are taught righteousness and believe).
To Whom is the Third Elijah Sent?

The first Elijah and the second Elijah (John the Baptist) were both sent to the covenant people (Israelites). All the prophecies concerning national Israel just prior to Christ's return clearly show a powerful warning and witness message being given to the house of Judah (the Jews) and the house of Israel (the ten scattered tribes of Israel). From these prophecies, we can assume that the third Elijah will also proclaim God's message to Israel.

If indeed the third Elijah is sent to modern day Israel, his message will be heard loud and clear in the Jewish nation of Israel as well as the Israelitish nations, which include the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Northwestern European nations.

The Third Elijah's Message

When we review the ministries of the first Elijah and the second Elijah (who came in the spirit and power of the first), we find that both had one major thing in common—the proclaiming of a powerful warning message of repentance to God's covenant people and calling for them to return to the uncorrupted worship of the true God to avoid his wrath.

The primary emphasis of the ministries of the first two Elijahs concerned the establishment and/or restoration of a spiritual relationship between God and his chosen people. It is also evident by what is said of the third Elijah's ministry that this will also be one of his messages.

A Warning of Punishment

Before God administers punishment, he always sends a prophet to warn his covenant people that he is about to punish them for their wickedness and rebellion against him. Therefore, because the third Elijah will be a prophet, it seems logical that he will give Israel a warning to repent and return to their God or suffer a horrific punishment for their refusal to repent and worship the true God.

If the third Elijah comes with the same type of authority and discretionary power as the first Elijah, he will more than likely use this power like the first Elijah did in the performance of his responsibilities.

How Will Elijah be Recognized?

Because the second Elijah was not recognized until Christ revealed that he was John the Baptist, it is logical to ask how the third Elijah will be recognized for who and what he is. There are three major things that will help one to recognize the third prophet Elijah:
1. His message of the restoration of the spiritual truths concerning God's first covenant with national Israel and the new covenant that God the Father established through Jesus Christ.

2. His call for the civil and religious leaders and the people of the houses of Judah and Israel to repent and return to the true worship of God.

3. His knowledge, understanding, and proclamation of the true gospel message as set forth by Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the unified spirit-filled body of Christ.

By B.L. Cocherrl and Charles E. Barrett  

b2w10
The two men called the Two Witnesses in the Book of Revelation, chapter 11 play a pivotal role in fulfilling prophecies concerning the calling of humanity to repentance and the proclaiming of God the Father's good news message to the world. As we will see, the scriptures show that these two men will be given tremendous authority and spiritual power from God in order to accomplish their mission just before the first resurrection and the return of Jesus Christ to conquer the earth and establish the Kingdom of God. See Matt.24:14.

Because the actions of the Two Witnesses will have a dramatic impact on the whole world during their 3½ year ministry, it is important to understand who they are and why God will send them. Therefore, this study of the major prophecies concerning these two men is presented in a chronological order of prophetic events.

THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM

The building of a temple and the establishment of the sacrificial system of worship are required under the covenant that God made with national Israel at Mount Sinai and are central to the mission of the Two Witnesses and the fulfillment of many of the prophecies leading up to the first resurrection and the return of Christ. Therefore, it is important to have an overview of how the building of the temple will develop.

Daniel prophesied that the daily sacrifices would be stopped and an abomination will desecrate the holy place within the temple at the end of the age. The gospel of Matthew records that Jesus referred to this same event as being one of the signs leading to his coming. In order for the daily sacrifices to be stopped and the holy place to be desecrated, there are a minimum of three things that must exist in Jerusalem in accordance with the Sinai covenant: An altar for sacrifices, priests of the Aaronic bloodline to perform the sacrifices, and a temple with a holy place in it.

Because the temple is the focal point of the Two Witnesses' ministry, it must be concluded that the Aaronic priesthood will be established with a high priest to officiate over it and a temple will be constructed in Jerusalem before Christ returns. But, who will begin the process of building the temple and re-establishing the priesthood and the sacrificial system in Jerusalem?
THE RED HEIFER

One of the major signs that human rule on earth is rapidly coming to an end is the eventual discovery of the ashes of the red heifer, which were used by the Levitical Priesthood in various rituals. The reason this event is so important is that these ashes are necessary in order to reestablish the sacrificial system of worship at a temple in Jerusalem. Without these ashes, the sacrificial worship system specified under the covenant between the Creator God and national Israel can neither be established nor performed, which means no offering of atonement can be made to cover the sins of the people and the nation.

The finding of the ashes of the red heifer will be very exciting to Orthodox Jews who desperately want to begin the sacrificial system in order to reconcile themselves and the House of Judah to the Creator God. Another group of people who will be very excited about the finding of these ashes are those who understand the prophecies in the biblical record concerning the end of the age events and the importance of these ashes to the fulfillment of these events.

Of course, many people will be outraged by the institution of the sacrificial system enabled by the ashes of the red heifer. Among these people will be animal rights activist, professing Christians, followers of Muhammad who despise Jews and their religion, and major world powers which will view the establishment of a sacrificial system of worship in Jerusalem as a threat to political stability in the region.

The following information is not meant to set dates or to be an exhaustive explanation of the symbolic meaning of the red heifer; it is meant to provide an overview of one of the major events that will set the stage for the great tribulation and the Messiah's return.

The Ashes Disappear

Because the law of sacrifices under the first covenant with national Israel required the existence of the ashes of the red heifer as a prerequisite for the temple system to begin and continue its function, it is logical to assume that just before the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, the Priesthood hid the existing ashes of the red heifer. There is no record of these ashes being found and used after 70 A.D., so it is logical to conclude they still remain hidden, awaiting the proper time in God's plan for their discovery and use in a new temple.

During the First and Second Temples, the heifer's ashes were divided into three parts: one portion was given to the Levites guarding the Temple entrance; the second portion was stored on the Mount of Olives to be used in the purification of the priests; and the remaining third was placed in a wall which faced the Women's Gallery of the Temple. According to Numbers 19: 9-10, a portion of these ashes were to be kept outside the camp. These undistributed ashes may have been kept in reserve to mix with the ashes of the next sacrificial red heifer. Perhaps, these are the ashes that have been safely hidden for centuries.
Theories abound as to where these ashes are and a number of individuals have dedicated most of their lives and resources to finding them. Of course, they may well already be in the hands of the priesthood who are waiting for the right time to announce their discovery. It is certain that, without these ashes, there can be no lawful sacrificial system of worship established in Jerusalem.

The Red Heifer Altar

According to scripture, the red heifer must be sacrificed and burnt outside the camp (Num.19:3). Historical evidence, Jewish oral tradition, and rabbinical writings tell us that the place of sacrifice was about 2,000 cubits east of the Chamber of Hewn Stones, which was located on the left side of the altar of burnt offerings on the temple mount during the time of Herod's Temple (Middoth 5:4; Sanhedrin 11:2; Yoma 25a). This means that the place of sacrifice was somewhere near the top of the Mount of Olives, which is close to where Christ was crucified, according to the best scholarly sources and evidence.

The sacrificial law requires the red heifer be sacrificed and burnt in a clean place (Num.19:9). According to biblical law, a clean place is a place which has been purified and kept pure through sacrificial ritual. Since the sacrificial system of worship ceased in 70 A.D. with the destruction of the temple, there has not been a clean place within the nation of Israel. Therefore, in order for a clean place to be established for the sacrifice and burning of the next red heifer, the mixture of ashes from the previous heifers must be found and used to purify the place of sacrifice and burning.

If it were not for historical evidence, the proclivity of the priesthood to follow biblical law and oral tradition, and the prophecy about where the Messiah's feet will touch down when he returns to earth (Zech.14:3-4), it would seem that the red heifer could be sacrificed and burnt anywhere outside the camp (i.e., Jerusalem).

The priesthood will most certainly put forth every effort to perform the sacrifice of the red heifer on the Mount of Olives, but much of the Mount of Olives is under the control of Arabs who are opposed to the Jewish religion, so if the location chosen for the sacrifice is controlled by the Arabs, there will have to be political, military, or supernatural intervention, or some other arrangement made in order to allow the priesthood continual access to this place of sacrifice.

The Coming Temple

The functioning of the sacrificial system requires a sanctuary and altars for sacrifice. After a sanctuary is built and furnished, it must still be dedicated and made acceptable for sacred use. One of the primary aspects of the setting apart of the sanctuary for sacred use involves the blood of the red heifer, which must be sacrificed outside the camp in a clean place, which can only be cleansed with the ashes of the red heifer that have been kept in perpetuity since the time of the sacrifice of the first
red heifer. Without the blood of the red heifer, no temple can be dedicated. The following are four other reasons that finding the ashes of the red heifer are essential to the sacrificial system:

1. Sins of ignorance cannot be atoned for, unless there is a clean place cleansed by the ashes of the red heifer to burn the portions of this offering, which are not allowed to be burnt on the altar of sacrifices at the sanctuary. See Lev.4:1-12.

2. The ashes from the burnt offerings made at the sanctuary must be disposed of at a clean place, which has been cleansed by the ashes of the red heifer in compliance with the law of sacrifice. See Lev.6:8-11.

3. The test and curse for adultery cannot be preformed without holy water, which requires the ashes of the red heifer. See. Num.5:17-28.

4. The water used to make a separation of the unclean from the clean (i.e., the unholy from the holy) and to expiate sin requires the ashes of the red heifer. Once the sin is expiated through the use of the holy water, the object or the person is in harmony with the realm of the sacred. See Num.19:9.

**Building the Temple**

The only real obstacle to building a temple for the worship of God in Jerusalem at this time is the stubbornness of the Levitical Priesthood and its supporters who adamantly refuse to consider any location for a temple but the Temple Mount where Herod's Temple was built. It is well known that a number of biblical scholars have shown beyond doubt that Solomon's Temple was not located on the Dome of the Rock or where Herod's Temple was built, but was located at a lower elevation at the City of David. Moreover, there is no biblical restriction as to where a temple may be built before the return of the Messiah.

**The Last Red Heifer**

It is said that the last red heifer appeared in a Gentile herd during the first century before the destruction of the Temple. According to rabbinical sources, no flawless red heifer has been born within the biblical land of Israel since 70 A.D.. If these accounts are true, the appearance of a red heifer in a Gentile herd and the absence of a flawless red heifer surely indicate that God is telling the house of Judah that a change has been made in the method of purification and atonement, pointing directly to the fulfillment of the prophecies of the promised Messiah (i.e., Christ).

**Breeding Projects**

There have been and still are a number of breeding projects, which are attempting to produce a pure red heifer for sacrifice. As interesting and well meaning as these projects are, according to Jewish oral tradition, when a red heifer was required for the continence of the sacrificial system, one simply appeared in the herds of Israel.
According to orthodox rabbis and scripture, the red heifer must be totally red, without physical defect, never been put under the yoke, and be three years old, otherwise it is unsuitable for sacrifice (Num.19:2; Jer.38:34). Some orthodox rabbis believe that, even as few as three black or white hairs or red hair mixed with any other color, renders the animal unacceptable for sacrifice. Although there seems to be some disagreement about how red is red, this will all be sorted out when God deems the time is right for the sacrifice.

Because God is guiding the events that lead up to the building of a new temple at Jerusalem, we can be sure that he will provide a red heifer at the right time without the intervention of humans.

**Red Heifers Sacrificed**

There are two opposing opinions as to how many red heifers have been sacrificed to date: One source says there have been seven and another says there have been nine. Either way, it is important to note that it is a rare sacrifice and the number of red heifers sacrificed is important from a symbolic and perhaps a prophetic point of view.

The biblical record was written by dozens of men over centuries of time, most of these men were not scholars, scientists, or mathematicians; however, an intricate mathematical pattern is found to exist from the first verse of scripture to the last.

Every word, sentence, phrase, and concept, pertaining to any given subject is linked together with a specific numerical value or mathematical equation which is unique to itself.

The mathematical construction of the Bible is beyond the ability of modern technology to reproduce and it is far beyond the realm of mere blind chance. The mathematical complexity and structure of the biblical record proves beyond a doubt that a supreme intelligence guided its construction. Therefore, we should consider the symbolic and prophetic symbolism of these sacrifices.

The number 7 is symbolic of perfection, completeness, finalization, or bringing to an end. The sacrificing of a eighth heifer would be significant, because the number 8 is primarily symbolic of a new beginning. When the Messiah returns he will end human rule on earth and begin the next phase of God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

The number 9 is symbolic of an end, conclusion, finality, and judgement. The sacrificing of a tenth heifer would also be significant, because the number 10 is symbolic of perfection of divine order, testimony, and the law. When the Messiah returns he will institute his heavenly Father's order and law over the entire earth.
Summary

The rules concerning exactly how the red heifer must be sacrificed and burnt are undoubtedly full of symbolic meaning, because the red heifer, as well as all the other animal sacrifices offered for sin or purification were in some way symbolic of the sacrifice of the Messiah and the expiation of sin. While explaining that Christ was the ultimate and final sacrifice for sin, the writer to the Hebrews makes the following summation:

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb.9:13-14).

Just as the red heifer was sacrificed outside the camp, the Messiah was sacrificed outside the city of Jerusalem, possibly on or near the very spot where Abraham was prepared to offered Isaac two thousand years earlier.

The theological debate over the importance of the red heifer's ashes will be short lived once the discovery of the ashes is made known. If, indeed, this is the end of this present phase of God's plan for the salvation of humanity, these ashes will be used to institute the sacrificial worship system. 1,150 days after the institution of sacrifices at the temple these sacrifices will be stopped and the greatest trouble the world has ever seen will begin in earnest as the Messiah begins to prepare the world for his return and rule.

For the purpose of understanding the sequence of events which will occur just before the great tribulation begins in preparation for the return of Christ, the essential thing to understand is that, if we are living in the end of the age just prior to the Messiah's return, the sacrifice of a red heifer must happen. Without this sacrifice, the fulfillment of prophecies concerning the sequence of events which must occur during the last 3 ½ years before Christ's return, will not go forward. However, once this sacrifice is made, the events that follow will irrevocably alter every aspect of human life on earth. From this time on, you must prepare in earnest to meet your maker.

References

For those who want to keep current on Jerusalem, the temple project, and the ashes of the red heifer, the following website is an excellent source of information: www.templemountfaithful.org
THE TEMPLE AND GOD'S PRESENCE

Historically, every time the Jews have turned back to God and his sacrificial system of worship, the Creator God has honored their effort with his presence. Therefore, it is a possibility that the Creator God, who became Christ, will honor their future attempt to honor him and will meet with them in the temple as he did anciently.

Within a relatively short time after the end of the age temple is completed, the armies of the Beast system will overrun the Jews. When this happens, the temple and the holiest of holies within this structure will be defiled. Because God cannot live with defilement, if his presence does come to reside in this end time temple, it will leave just as it did in the past before the temple was defiled. See Matt.24:15-16.

As the events leading up to Christ's return unfold, there will be intense opposition to Two Witnesses and others of the elect as they proclaim the coming Kingdom of God to be ruled by Jesus Christ.

THE PROPHET, GOVERNOR, AND HIGH PRIEST

"In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying: So speaks the Lord of hosts, saying, These people say, The time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built" (Hag.1:1-2 Para.).

The prophet Haggai brings a stern reprimand from God to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the high priest, regarding the lack of enthusiasm that they and the people of the house of Judah had for rebuilding his temple in which to perform his worship system. In the prophecies of Zechariah, these two individuals who were instrumental in rebuilding the temple and in establishing the sacrificial system of worship in Jerusalem (520 B.C.) are also symbolic of two prophetic individuals who will accomplish the same task just before the return of Christ.

"Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai saying, Is it a time for you, yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruin? Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: Give careful thought to the results of your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it" (Hag.1:3-6 Para.).

God sent Haggai the prophet to in essence tell them, Look, you are living in your luxurious homes and enjoying the good life, yet you are putting off rebuilding the temple (Hag.1:3-6). The point is that they had known for some time they should have been rebuilding the temple, but they had been procrastinating; therefore, God sent Haggai to command them to rebuild it.
The Jews in this age have known for many years that a temple should be built in Jerusalem and that God's sacrificial system of worship should be established, yet they have been procrastinating since the formation of the modern nation of Israel. They have ignored the clear instructions of God, just as their ancient ancestors did in the time of Haggai.

It is important to note that the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah covered some of the same time period. Therefore, in order to gain a clear picture of how God viewed the Jews' procrastination in not rebuilding his temple, how he reacted, and what he expected from that time forward, please read the rest of chapters 1 and 2 of Haggai. This information is important in understanding Zechariah's prophecies concerning the building of the temple in Jerusalem in the end of this age.

The Prophetic Zerubbabel

During the end of this age, the prophetic Zerubbabel (a government official in the Jewish nation of Israel) will receive a number of different messages from Jesus Christ concerning his call to repentance and salvation. Jesus Christ will also give him special authority, spiritual power, and responsibilities during the end of this age just before the first resurrection.

His Call and Authority

"The second time the word of the Lord came to Haggai in the 24th day of the ninth month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow their chariots, and their riders and horses, and their riders shall come down, each one by the sword of his brother. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and will make you as a signet: for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag.2:20-23 KJV Para.).

Clearly, this is a prophecy for the end of this age when God will shake the heavens and the earth causing great destruction. He will then conquer the nations of this world. Notice that Zerubbabel is called to be a signet (Hebrew: Sum hotam. English: an authorized seal) for God. This man is given the authority to use the awesome power of God in a discretionary manner in order to carry out his responsibilities during the end of the age.

His Power Over Nations

In order to understand this prophecy, keep in mind that all of this prophecy is in the context of a prophet being sent to command a governmental official in the Jewish nation to initiate the process of building the temple.
Whatever Zerubbabel is going to do for God, he is going to do it through the supernatural power God gives him:

"This is God's message to Zerubbabel. Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of Hosts. Who are you, O great mountain [government/nation]? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. And he will bring forth the capstone [a reference to Christ] to shouts of Grace! Grace to it. And the word of the Lord came to me [Zechariah] saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you" (Zech.4:6-9 Para.).

These verses show the awesome power over this world's nations the prophetic Zerubbabel will have. He will have a major role in the building of a temple in Jerusalem along with his participation in proclaiming the gospel message that will culminate in the first resurrection and Christ's triumphant return.

The prophecies of Zechariah leave little doubt that a high government official of the Jewish nation of Israel is the prophetic Zerubbabel who will initiate the building of the temple in Jerusalem. The prophecies also seem to show that he may be one of the two witnesses. But, if he is not one of the two witnesses, he is an extremely important and powerful man who will proclaim the gospel message to the world during the end of this age.

THE PROPHETIC JOSHUA

In the third chapter of Zechariah, we see a clear and easily understood prophecy concerning the conversion of the high priest of the temple in Jerusalem to true Christianity during the end of the age.

"Then he [God's messenger] showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this [Joshua] a burning stick snatched from the fire? And Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and he stood before the angel" (Zech.3:1-3 Para.). See also Amos 4:11.

Here, we see the prophetic Joshua in his capacity as the high priest. Besides the messenger and Joshua, Satan is present to accuse Joshua of wrongdoing. This prophetic Joshua is called a burning stick pulled out of the fire, which symbolically pictures him in the process of being destroyed because of his sinfulness; however, God has rescued him from eternal death for his own righteous purpose.

Notice that Joshua's garments are very dirty. This is another reference to the spiritual condition of this man prior to his conversion to true Christianity.
Joshua's Sins Forgiven

In verses 4 and 5, a prophet from God (the prophetic Zechariah) is directly involved in the events surrounding the high priest's conversion to a son of God under the new covenant:

"The angel [messenger] said to those who were standing before him, Take off his filthy clothes. Then he said to Joshua, See, I have taken away your sin [lawlessness], and I will clothe you with a change of ceremonial robes. Then I [Zechariah] said, Put a clean turban on his head. So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the Lord stood by" (Zec.3:4-5 Para.).

The angel (messenger) says that he has taken away this man's sins, and it is the prophet (the prophetic Zechariah) who says to place a clean turban on Joshua's head. The placing of the turban again shows that the prophet from God is very involved in the conversion process of the high priest.

Concerning the messenger noted in verses four and five, it must be understood that angels do not have the authority to forgive sins. There are only two beings shown in the scriptures who can remove sins: God the Father and Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ does this through the authority given to him by his Father. Because the Father will not come to earth until his plan for the salvation of humanity has been completed, this messenger must either be Jesus Christ or someone else who has been authorized to give this message of forgiveness to the high priest. (The prophet Nathan gave such a message to David and Isaiah gave such a message to Hezekiah).

"The angel of the Lord gave this charge to Joshua: This is what the Lord Almighty says: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you will judge my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place to walk among these standing here" (Zech.3:6-7 Para.).

There are four extremely important things to note from verses 6-7:

1. The high priest has not been a righteous man, because he has lived his life as a Jew following the practices of Judaism, which are practices Jesus said were in opposition to the righteous ways of his heavenly Father. See Matt.3:7; 12:33-34; 15:7-9.

2. In order to continue in his office as high priest, this man must observe and practice the ways of righteousness that will have been revealed to him. And he must also perform the mission he will be given.

3. This man will be offered the awesome opportunity to represent God the Father and Jesus Christ, govern the household of God (the servants of God), be responsible for spiritual things of God on earth, and fellowship with the Father's earthly servants.
4. This man will have an awesome opportunity and an equally awesome responsibility. However, if he does not follow through with what he has been instructed to do, he will lose his eternal salvation; because, whoever functions as the high priest in the end of the age is one of the Two Witnesses and will have the Father's holy spirit. Anyone who fails to follow God's ways after receiving the holy spirit will die the second death in the Lake of Fire. See Matt.13:36-42; Rom.6:23; Rev.21:8.

THE THREE FROM BABYLON

Either just before or shortly after the temple has been constructed in Jerusalem, three individuals will come to the high priest bearing gold and silver to be used in the making of crowns for his use as he officiates in his capacity as high priest and one of the Two Witnesses.

The prophecy of the three men from Babylon is an extremely technical and difficult prophecy to understand. Perhaps, the only ones who will fully understand it before Christ returns are those who will be directly involved in its fulfillment. However, there is some important information regarding the high priest and his end of the age ministry that can be gained from studying this prophecy.

Zechariah 6:9-11, 14-15 Paraphrased

Because of the complexity of this prophecy, a paraphrased translation is used with notes and a literal translation is attached at the end of this chapter for those who want to make a more in-depth study of this specific prophecy.

"And the Lord spoke to me saying, Take of them, from the exiles Heldai, and from Tobijah, and from Jedaijah who have come from Babylon; and in that day you go and enter into the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah" (vs.9-10).

These three men come from among the ten scattered tribes of Israel (the exiles) who are collectively called Babylon because of the many paganized religious systems being practiced by these Israelitish nations.

"And take the silver and gold and make crowns, and set one on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest:" (v11).

The prophet whom God sends to deal with the high priest is responsible for taking the gold and silver and making crowns.

"And the crowns shall be for a memorial in the temple of the Lord for Helem, and to Tobijah, and Jedaijah, and to Hen, the son of Zephaniah" (v14).

There are four individuals mentioned who will be memorialized because of the good work they will have done in regard to the high priest and the temple.
"And the distant ones shall come and build in the temple of the Lord. And you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. And this shall be, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God" (v15).

An interesting thing to note in verse 15 is that the word you is in the plural form throughout, which suggests that a group of people are being addressed by the prophet. Whoever these three are who come from afar, they will either build in or on the temple.

There are two ways to view this passage. It refers to either the physical building of the temple or the building of spiritual things within an established spiritual entity, such as the body of Christ. See the attached notes with the literal translation of this text for more comments concerning this prophecy.

Zechariah 6:11 seems to support the premise that the crowns are the faith once delivered, which will become a memorial to these men in the temple (the end of the age church). If this is true, these three could be of the elect who come to Jerusalem and are instrumental in restoring the truth of God and bringing it to those who officiate over the priesthood.

Perhaps, the fourth man is a prophet of God and may, along with the other three, be instrumental in the conversion of the Two Witnesses by teaching them the restored truths of God.

It is obvious that these scriptures are speaking of a physical temple in Jerusalem at the time of the end. However, the last part of verse 14—"as a memorial in the temple of the Lord"—could refer to the spiritual temple of God, which is the elect (the church).

THE PROPHETIC OLIVE TREES

"Then the angel who had been talking with me woke me, as though I had been asleep. What do you see? he asked. I said, I see a golden lamp stand with seven lamps and a bowl on top of it with seven tubes that feed the seven lamps, and two olive trees are beside it, one on the right of the bowl and one on its left. And I spoke to the angel that was talking with me, and asked, What are these my lord? And he said to me, Do you not know what these are? And I said no my lord" (Zech.4:1-5 Para.).

In order to understand the prophetic meaning of verses 1 through 5, it is necessary to study verses 11 through 14, because they seem to be a continuation of the prophecy in verses 1 through 5:

"Then I asked the angel, What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lamp-stand? Again I asked him, "What are these two clusters of olives that are beside the two golden pipes emptying the golden oil from themselves? He replied, Do you not know what these are? No, my lord, I said. So he said, These are the two sons of fresh oil who stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech.4:11-14 Para.).
The Two Olive Trees

Trees are often symbolic of men or people and the olive tree is sometimes symbolic of righteousness and that which endures; therefore, it seems logical that the trees represent two righteous men.

Because the angel says that the olive trees are two individuals who are at the right and left side of God, it can be assumed that these two play an extremely important role in the plan of God for the salvation of humanity.

The Hebrew word translated 'lamp-stand' is 'manora', which is the Hebrew word for the lamp-stand that stood in the ancient temple.

The Oil and the Lamp-Stand

The seven lamps are light-givers and because this is a prophecy for the end of the age, it seems logical that the seven lamps are symbolic of the seven churches and/or seven spiritual leaders that exist and give spiritual light to the world just before Christ returns. See Rev.1:12,20; 2:1.

The bowl at the top of the lamp-stand is a reservoir holding the golden oil, which comes from clusters of olives on the two olive trees (i.e., the fruit of the two trees). The Hebrew word for fresh oil noted in verse 14 is 'yitsar', which refers to fresh oil used for cooking and in lamps to give light.

Many hold the belief that this golden oil is symbolic of the holy spirit; however, the holy spirit comes from God the Father and this fresh oil comes from these two men who serve the Lord of the earth (Jesus Christ) at his right and left hand through the clusters of olives. Therefore, it seems logical that the fresh oil is spiritual insight, knowledge, and understanding that is directed through these two men to the seven churches (i.e., the elect) who will use this spiritual enlightenment to fulfill their functions and responsibilities.

THE MINISTRY OF THE TWO WITNESSES

Revelation 11:3-14, Literal Translation

"And I will give to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lamp-stands [candlesticks] before the Lord of the earth" (vs.3-4).

This is absolute proof that the two olive trees that are noted in Zechariah 4:1-5, 11-14 are symbolic of the two witnesses. Because Zechariah 3:1-10 clearly shows that the high priest who will officiate in a temple in Jerusalem is a direct representative of Jesus Christ, he is most likely one of the Two Witnesses.
These two men will have powerful protection from all their enemies as they proclaim God's message and cause tremendous destruction on the earth through the use of their supernatural spiritual power, in order to prove that what they say is from God. These two men will have the spiritual power to destroy anyone who attempts to stop them from completing their ministry:

"And if anyone desires to harm them, fire comes out of their mouth and devours their enemies. And if any one desires to harm them, so it is right for him to be killed" (v5).

"These have the authority to shut up the heaven, that no rain may rain in the days of their prophecy [3½ years]. And they have authority over the waters, to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire" (v6).

Their proclamation of the gospel as a witness and warning to the world will be accomplished over a period of 3½ years and will be performed with unimaginable power, signs, and wonders.

"And when they complete their witness, the beast coming up out of the abyss will make war with them, and will overcome them, and kill them" (v7).

Only after their mission is complete will God allow them to be killed by the Beast, but only for the purpose of showing that their witness was true and that they were indeed sent from the true God.

"And their bodies will be on the street of that great city, which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where our lord was crucified" (v8).

After they are murdered by the leaders of the Beast system in Jerusalem, their bodies will be left to lie in the street.

"And some from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will see their dead bodies for three and a half days and refuse them burial. And the inhabitants of the earth will rejoice, and celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth" (vs.9-10).

After killing the Two Witnesses, the world will gloat and celebrate, because these two troublemakers who brought so much physical and economic destruction to the world are dead.

"And after the three and a half days a spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear struck those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them [the Two Witnesses] Come up here. And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies watched" (vs.11-12).
Because these two men will have been dead for $\frac{3}{2}$ days, it is easy to imagine the fear and terror that will grip those who see them come back to life, hear a voice from heaven calling to them, and watch them rise through the air and disappear in the clouds.

"And in that hour was a great earthquake and a tenth part of the city fell. And seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, seven thousand names of men, and the rest became terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven" (v13).

Throughout the ministry of these two witnesses, God will bring various types of plagues upon the earth as punishment upon his covenant people and the rest of the world for their wickedness. He will also call for them to repent and be saved from his wrath that will soon come in great fury upon all of humanity. Shortly after the death of the Two Witnesses, there will be a great earthquake that will clearly show that the God of the Two Witnesses is not finished with his punishment of the wicked and that there is more death and destruction to come.

"The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon" (v14).

As these events unfold in rapid succession, the festive attitude of the people will suddenly turn to terror and panic as they realize that more devastating plagues are coming.

SUMMARY

Just before the first resurrection and Christ's return as Conquering King to establish his Father's Kingdom and during the end of this age of human rule on earth, there will be two dynamic and powerful men who will proclaim God the Father's good news message from Jerusalem. One of these men will be the high priest who presides over the temple worship system in Jerusalem. Although there is no concrete scriptural proof, it is likely that the governmental official in Israel who initiates the building of the temple will also be one of the two men who proclaim the gospel from Jerusalem.

Because both of these men will be God's direct representatives on earth, it can safely be assumed that they will become sons of the Father's new creation sometime before the beginning of their collective ministry. Together with the congregations of God scattered throughout the world, these two will preach a powerful warning message of repentance to the house of Judah (the Jews/Israelis), the house of Israel (the ten scattered tribes of Israel), and the world at large.
ATTACHMENT

Zechariah 6:9-15 Literal Translation

"And the word of He Is was to me [i.e., Zechariah, 'Yah has remembered'], saying, Take from the exile; from Heldai [my durations], and from Tobijah [my good is Yah], and from Jedaiah [Yah has known] and you [the prophet] will come in that day, and you will come to the house of Josiah [Yah will support], the son of Zephaniah [Yah has treasured/hidden] who have come from Babylon" (vs.9-10).

"And you shall take silver and gold and make crowns, and you [the prophet] will place on the head of Joshua [He Is, is salvation] the son of Jehozadak [He Is, has been righteous], the great priest" (v11).

"And say to him [the high priest]: Thus said He Is armies, saying, Behold a man—Tsemah [sprout/growth] is his name, and from under him [Tsemah] it will sprout, and he will build the temple of He Is" (v12).

"And he [the prophetic Zerubbabel] will build the temple of He Is. And he will carry splendor and he will sit and rule on his throne and a council [abstract noun, not a person] of peace shall be between the two of them [the priest and his throne]" (v13).

"And the crowns will be for Helem [a dream], and to Tobijah [my good is Yah], and Jedaiah [Yah has known], and to Hen [grace], the son of Zephaniah [Yah has treasured/hidden] for a memorial in the temple of He Is" (v14).

"And the distant ones will come and they will build in/on the temple of He Is and you [plural] will know that He Is armies has sent me [the prophet] to you [plural]. And it will be so if you [plural] listen well to the voice of He Is; your God" (v15).

By B.L. Cocherell
CHAPTER
TWELVE
THE PROPHECY OF HAGGAI

The prophecy of Haggai is very short yet very important because its primary focus is on the end of the age right before the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. The message of Haggai is directly tied to Zechariah's prophecy concerning the events that will occur during this same time period.

JERUSALEM AND THE HOLY LAND

This study represents our understanding of the sequence of events that will unfold surrounding Jerusalem and the Holy Land as prophesied by Haggai. The understanding presented here is based on many clear prophecies about the end of the age and the return of Jesus Christ. However, please understand that, by the time you read this, some of these events may have already occurred.

The events shown in Haggai's prophecy are very compressed, and many of these events will happen in an extremely short period of time. It is clear that the focal point of Haggai's prophecy is the contemporary nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem in particular. His prophecy also foretells events that will impact not only the Holy Land but also all other nations on earth.

THE TIME PERIOD

In order to clearly establish the time period in which the prophetic portions of Haggai's writings will be fulfilled, it is necessary to review the following four topic areas contained in Haggai's writings:

1. All Nations Will Be Shaken
2. The Heavens and Earth Will Be Shaken
3. The Past and Present Building of the Temple
4. The Instruction to Build the Temple

1. All Nations Will Be Shaken

"For this says the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, says the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag.2:6-9 KJV).
It is clear from the scriptures that there has never been a time in history when God has shaken the heavens, the earth, and all the nations. But, this is what he says he will do just before Jesus returns as King of kings at the end of this age. See also Heb.12:26.

2. The Heavens and Earth Will Be Shaken

"Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, will I take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and will make you as a signet: for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag.2:21-23 KJV).

Clearly, this is an end of the age prophecy. Here, we see that God shakes the heavens and the earth, overthrowing the kingdoms (nations) of the world. "In that day," is a reference to the end of the age (Isa.2:17-21; Zeph.1:7-10, 12-16; Joel 3:9-18; Zech.14:1-8,13,20). And as we will see, it is also very clear that God gives the prophetic end-time Zerubbabel great power and authority to represent him and proclaim his good news message to the world.

3. Past and Present Building of the Temple

"And now, I ask you to consider from this day and forward, from the time before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord" (Hag.2:15 Para.).

"Consider now from this day and forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it" (Hag.2:18 Para.).

Both of these references about laying the foundation and construction of the temple refer to a past and a future fulfillment.

The Seed

"Is the seed yet in the barn? yes, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, has not brought forth: from this day will I bless you" (Hag.2:19 Para.).

Symbolically, the word seed normally refers to either the Messiah or the elect of God. Because the word barn is used in the context of a harvest, and the elect of God are the first of his harvest of humanity that will be collected prior to Christ's return, it is highly likely that this seed refers to the elect of God who are called to salvation, and the barn represents the Family and Kingdom of God. The various trees that are to bring forth fruit seem to symbolize those servants of God who preach the gospel in the end of the age. See Mic.4:2; Matt.3:10-12; 13:30-42.
4. The Instruction to Build the Temple

"In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, This says the Lord of hosts, These people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built [i.e., The rebuilding of the temple is being delayed]" (Hag.1:1-2 Para.).

"This says the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the Lord" (Hag.1:7-8 Para.).

This refers to a past and a future fulfillment. For many years, the Jews (the Israelis) have made plans to build a temple. They have procured the necessary items for the practice of the sacrificial system, prepared a priesthood for service, and even become aware of the ceremonial hand gestures necessary in order to give offerings and sacrifices. However, they have not gone forward because of political pressure and a persistent controversy that surrounds the location of the future temple (i.e., the City of David, the Temple Mount, or The Mount of Olives). They have prepared for the building of the temple because they know that God requires a temple as part of his covenant agreement with his chosen people, yet they have procrastinated just as their ancient ancestors did.

HAGGAI'S PROPHECIES

When examining the first two chapters of Haggai, notice the authority that is behind these prophecies. The expressions "Then came the word of the Lord" and "This says the Lord" occur twenty-five times in just two chapters. This shows the enormous importance of these prophecies to the fulfillment of God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

Haggai recorded the following five messages about the events that will dramatically affect world events just before the first resurrection and Christ's return to establish his Father's kingdom on earth:

1. The instruction to construct the temple is given (Hag.1:1-12).
2. The construction of the temple is begun (Hag.1:13-15).
3. The Jews are encouraged to build the temple (Hag.2:1-9).
4. The Jews are a defiled people who need a temple (Hag.2:10-19).
5. Zerubbabel will be a personal representative of God (Hag.2:20-23).

HISTORICAL AND FUTURE DATES

It is not very often that God mentions the specific dates of events in prophecy by the day, month, and year; however, in both chapters of Haggai, specific dates are mentioned. Most likely, these same dates are also prophetic and tied to significant events in the end of the age. See the last page of this chapter for a summary table which outlines these five messages and the sacred calendar dates associated with them.
The Instruction to Build the Temple

The 1st Day of the 6th Month (Sacred Calendar)

"In the second year of Darius the king [a date historically established as 520 B.C.] in the sixth month, in the first day of the month [a New Moon] came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, This says the Lord of hosts. This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house [the temple] should be built" (Hag.1:1-2 Para.).

Historically, the temple had actually been started in 538 B.C., instead of 520 B.C., because a decree was issued that stopped its construction for almost eighteen years due to political pressure. Therefore, God sent a prophet to stir the Jews into action. It is likely that a similar sequence of events will occur concerning building a temple in modern Jerusalem.

"Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O you, to dwell in your finished houses, and this house lie waste?" (Hag.1:3-4 Para).

These were Jews who had come out of captivity and were trying to fulfill their own desires. Today, a similar situation exists. The Israelis have been building their own nation, their own homes, and their own economy without regard for building a temple in which to worship God.

"Now therefore this says the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways [take stock of what you are doing.] You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but you have not enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages earns wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Hag.1:5-6 Para).

This scripture was true then and it is true today. Look at the way money is wasted in Israel. Modern Israel still has problems with their economy and consistently needs to be supported by the western powers, especially the United States. Yet, Israel is a prosperous nation by world standards.

"This says the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways [think about what you are doing]. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house [the temple]; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the Lord. You looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that is waste, and you run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you holds back its dew, and the earth is prevented from bearing fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the grain, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground brings forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands" (Hag.1:7-11 Para).
After this stern reprimand from God through his emissary Haggai the prophet, the governor, the high priest, and the people were moved to rebuild the temple.

"Then Zerubbabel [the governor of Judah at the time this was written.] the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord” (Hag.1:12 Para).

The Construction of the Temple Begins

The 24th Day of The 6th Month (Sacred Calendar)

"Then the Lord's messenger Haggai, spoke the Lord's message to the people, saying, I am with you, says the Lord. If you do this, God says he will be with you in doing it. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God. In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king" (Hag.1:13-15 Para.).

The date given for the beginning of construction is the 24th day of the 6th month of the 2nd year of King Darius' reign (520 B.C.). Could it be that this same day and month are important in the end of the age and are a reference to when key preparations will be made that lead to the construction of a temple in Jerusalem?

The 21st Day of the 7th Month (Sacred Calendar)

"In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month [this was also the 7th day of the Feast of Shelters/Ingathering, which is the last day of the Festival prior to the Festival of the Eighth Day], came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying. Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” (Hag.1:1-3 Para).

Some of these Jews had seen the magnificent splendor of the temple that Solomon had built for God's presence to dwell in. Here, God reminds them that he requires a proper temple for his presence to dwell in instead of the ruins that the temple had become.
"Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedeck, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work: for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts: According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so my spirit remains among you: fear you not" (Hag.1:4-5 Para.).

This same message is also meant for the Jews who live in this age, because God made a covenant with all of Israel, including the Jews, from the time that he brought them out of Egypt to participate in his plan for the salvation of humanity to this present day and far into the future—even after Christ's return. Notice that verses six and seven clearly place the time frame of verses four and five in the end of the age:

"For this says the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag.1:6-7 Para.).

Of what house is Haggai speaking? He is referring to the temple of God at Jerusalem in the end of the age and he may also be referring to the new temple that will be constructed in Jerusalem after Christ's return.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, says the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag.1:8-9 Para).

Again, this likely has two applications; one is right in the end of the age and the other can be after the return of Christ. God will grant relative peace during the time the temple is being built in the end of the age and for a short time thereafter.

The Jews are a Defiled People Who Need a Temple

The 24th Day of the 9th Month (Sacred Calendar)

"In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying. This says the Lord of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then Haggai said , If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, says the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer is unclean" (Hag.1:10-14 Para).
Here, God says that these Jews are physically and spiritually unclean before him. But why are they unclean? They are unclean because they do not have a temple in which to atone for their physical and spiritual sins. They cannot perform the sacrifices that are required under the Mount Sinai Covenant through which their physical and spiritual defilement can be set aside. Therefore, they are impure, and God cannot dwell with them to nurture, protect, and bless them as he desires until they again establish the temple worship system.

**Jerusalem**

"And now, I ask you, consider from this day forward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord [before the construction of the temple begins]: Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressman for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of your hands; yet you turned not to me, says the Lord. Consider now from this day forward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was established. Set your heart" (Hag.1:15-19 Para.).

Here, we see that those who are to participate in the building of the temple and the establishment of the sacrificial worship system must carefully consider the enormity of the events that they are about to set in motion. Notice that they are to give themselves to this task without reservation of any kind.

**Zerubbabel Will be a Personal Representative of God on Earth**

"And again the word of the Lord came to Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor [high position in the Israeli government] of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, will I take you, O Zerubbabel [high ranking government official], my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and will make you as a signet [a symbol of royal authority]: for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag.1:20-23 Para.).

In order to understand this prophecy, it is important to keep in mind that all of this prophecy is in the context of a prophet being sent to command a governmental official in the Jewish nation to initiate the process of building the temple just before Jesus Christ's powerful intervention into world affairs. Zerubbabel is called to be a signet (i.e., an authorized seal) for God, because he is given the authority to use the awesome power of God to carry out his responsibilities during the end of the age.
SPECIFIC DATES FOR EVENTS BEFORE CHRIST'S RETURN

Below are a number of things that should be considered when trying to understand the specific dates that are noted in Haggai's prophecy:

- Because Haggai's prophecy has prophetic duality (a past and future fulfillment) and because there are a number of specific days and months mentioned, these dates probably have prophetic importance.
- It is clear from the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah that, in the end of the age, God will again be using a Zerubbabel (an Israeli official) and a Joshua (the high priest of the temple worship system) to be in charge of the building of the temple.
- In relation to building the temple in Jerusalem, the prophetic time line that is shown in the passages of the Great Pyramid of Gaza reveals that the same basic sequence of events which occurred in 520 B.C. will occur again before Christ's return.

With the above information and the background material we have reviewed, we can review the specific prophetic dates, events, and people mentioned in Haggai that surround the future construction of the temple in Jerusalem.

The 1\textsuperscript{st} Day of the 6\textsuperscript{th} Month (Sacred Calendar)

The Instruction to Build the Temple

The message given on the 1\textsuperscript{st} day of the 6\textsuperscript{th} sacred month, concerns God's prophet being sent to contact Zerubbabel and Joshua regarding the need to rebuild the temple. Therefore, it is highly likely that God will send a prophet to the modern equivalent of Zerubbabel (an Israeli government official) and Joshua (the one who will become the high priest) on the first day (a new moon) of the 6\textsuperscript{th} sacred month to instruct them to move the temple building project forward. See Hag.1:1.

The 24\textsuperscript{th} Day of The 6\textsuperscript{th} Month (Sacred Calendar)

Temple Construction Begins

The 24\textsuperscript{th} day of the 6\textsuperscript{th} sacred month is just a short time before the Festival of Trumpets. This seems to be the time when the Lord inspires Zerubbabel and Joshua to do work on the temple along with a remnant of the House of Judah. If this applies to the end of the age, it may mean that construction of the temple begins on this date. See Hag.1:15.

It seems likely that, shortly before this, there will be some kind of agreement involving the Islamic nations and the Israelis which will allow a temple to be built.
The 21st Day Of The 7th Month (Sacred Calendar)

God's Presence in the Temple

The 21st day of the 7th sacred month is the 7th day of the Festival of Shelters/Ingathering. This event in Haggai chapter 2 shows God's prophet encouraging Zerubbabel (Israeli official) and Joshua (the High Priest) to remain strong and telling them about the events that will shake up the world in the near future.

The prophet tells the prophetic Zerubbabel and Joshua to be strong, because God will be with them in building the temple and establishing the sacrificial system of worship, which will lead to God shaking the nations, the earth, and the heavens. See Hag.2:1.

It seems unlikely that, at this point in time, these two men will be aware of the tremendous task which lies ahead of them as personal representatives of Jesus Christ. They probably will be unaware of their part in bringing massive destruction upon the earth, including the destruction of the pagan religious and governmental systems of this world.

The 24th Day Of The 9th Month (Sacred Calendar)

Israel Is A Defiled Nation

The last date that is specifically mentioned is the 24th day of the 9th month on the sacred calendar.

Haggai 2:10-14 addresses the priesthood as a whole regarding the understanding of defilement, and prophetically shows that the people in the modern nation of Israel are living in a defiled condition before God and need to repent of their evil ways and receive national purification through God's sacrificial system of worship.

The Signet for God

The 24th day of the 9th month is also mentioned as the time when the prophet is given the charge to tell Zerubbabel that he will be God's signet on earth during the time when God pours out his wrath on a wicked and perverse generation:

"And again the word of the Lord came to Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth. And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the (nations); and I will overthrow the chariots, and those who ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother" (Hag.2:20-22 Para.).
Here, we see the prophet describing what is surely going to come to pass after the temple is built in Jerusalem. The peace that comes to the Israelis during the construction of the temple will be short lived, because Jesus Christ will intervene in world events and begin to pour out the wrath of God and overthrow the nations of earth through his signet.

"In that day, says the Lord of hosts, will I take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and will make you as a signet: For I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag.2:23 Para.).

SUMMARY

There is much information packed into Haggai's short prophecy, which seems to show that, in the latter days, God will likely send a prophet to urge an Israeli governmental official (the prophetic Zerubbabel) and the one who will become the High Priest (the prophetic Joshua) to initiate an action that will lead to the building of a temple in Jerusalem.

It is clear from the Book of Zechariah and the Book of Revelation that the prophetic Zerubbabel (an Israeli governmental official) and the prophetic Joshua (the high priest) who officiates over the temple system are going to have a major role in the construction of the temple after which they will be led to conversion as sons of the Father's new creation and assume their respective roles in preaching the gospel and doing God's will to bring about the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>SCRIPTURE</th>
<th>DATE ON SACRED CALENDAR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A call to build the Temple</td>
<td>Hag. 1:1-2</td>
<td>6th Month, 1st Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Encouragement to go forward in seeking God's will</td>
<td>Hag. 2:1-9</td>
<td>7th Month, 21st Day (7th Day of Festival of Shelters/Ingathering)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Jews Are A Defiled People who need a Temple</td>
<td>Hag. 2:10-19</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Promise To Zerubbabel To be a Signet for God</td>
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<td>9th Month, 24th Day</td>
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By B.L. Cocherell and Charles E. Barrett
CHAPTER
THIRTEEN

THE PROPHETIC SEALS AND PLAGUES OF
THE BOOK OF REVELATION

When studying the prophecies concerning the prophetic seals and plagues of the Book of Revelation, it is good to keep the following in mind:

- These prophecies were given to John during the demise of the early church, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and after the death of all the apostles but John.
- The organized and powerful preaching of the gospel was coming to an end, the elect were being persecuted, and their numbers were rapidly declining. Because the concentrated spiritual and physical power of the holy people was dissipating, the early church was about to cease its existence as a powerful spirit-filled entity.

KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING

There are several keys that will help us understand the prophetic seals and plagues of the Book of Revelation. One of these keys is in the first chapter of Revelation:

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God [the Father] gave him, to show his servants things which must shortly come to pass . . ." (Rev.1:1 Para.).

Notice that this book was written so that the Father's servants can understand what he and Jesus Christ are planning to do concerning the end of human rule on earth. Because it is probable that humanity is living in the time just before Christ's return, it is extremely important for the servants of God to understand the message that Christ sent them through John.

To The Seven Churches

"I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What you see, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia; to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea" (Rev.1:10-11 KJV).

Through the power of the holy spirit, the apostle John was projected far into the future, to a time just before the return of Jesus Christ. The information given to him was to be sent to seven churches that were in Asia, but why was he supposed to give the message only to seven of the churches in Asia?
One reason seems to be that these seven churches were centers of mail distribution and on a mail route that began and ended with the first and last churches mentioned (Ephesus and Laodicea), which indicates a prophetic progression of events with a beginning and ending point. It is also interesting that, in the end of the age, the Laodicean church seems to receive the severest persecution of all the seven churches and their persecution ends just before Christ's return.

The number seven is used in the Bible to symbolize a division of time, spiritual perfection, completeness, finality, and bringing to an end. Within the messages to these seven churches we see all of these symbolic meanings. Depicted in these seven churches are attitudes and behaviors that cause people to lose their salvation if they do not change them prior to the first resurrection.

THE FIRST FIVE CHAPTERS

It seems logical to assume that the chronological order of presentation in the first five chapters reveals important information that will help unlock the understanding of the first five seals. This is because the first five chapters contain background information concerning the inner-workings of God's government as it relates to his elect children. These chapters also reveal the basic attitudes and behaviors that existed in the church during John's time. These same attitudes and behaviors have existed in varying degrees throughout the centuries since John's time and will exist in the very end of the age.

It is only after this background information is given and after the churches have received their warnings from Jesus Christ that he opens the first seal.

THE FIRST FIVE SEALS

The first five seals contain a number of events and conditions that threaten the health, welfare, and safety of the earth's population, including God's elect. Many of the prophecies contained in the biblical record seem to indicate that, in the end of the age, the entire population of the earth will receive the wrath of God because of their rebellion against him. The descendants of the Patriarchs, Abraham, and Israel are specifically targeted to receive most of God's wrath.

As we study the first five seals, it will become apparent that all the conditions announced and/or caused by the opening of these seals have a continuation of fulfillment from their initiation to a time near the return of Christ.

It can be proven that the elect are to understand these prophecies (Dan.12:9-10; Rev.1:1). Moreover, some of these things should begin to happen very soon; therefore, it behooves us to discover the major meaning of the first five seals of this book.
An Overview

Matthew 24:1-13 Paraphrased

In Matthew 24:1-13, we are given an overview of the first five seals of the Book of Revelation and the conditions that will prevail right up to the end of the age when Jesus Christ returns to collect the Father's firstborn children at the first resurrection.

"And Jesus went out of the temple: and his disciples came to show him the buildings of the temple. But Jesus said to them, Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, There shall not be left here one stone on a stone which shall not be thrown down" (vs.1-2).

After being at the temple and meeting his disciples, he began to speak of the things that would happen after his death by foretelling the destruction of the temple complex, which would take place in about 40 years.

"And as he was sitting on the Mount of Olives the disciples came to him privately, and asked, Tell us when shall these things come to pass? And what will be the sign of your coming, and the end of the age?" (v3).

The disciples wanted to know three things: When the temple would be destroyed, when Jesus would restore national Israel to prominence, and when the current phase of humanity would end:

"Jesus answered them and said, See that no one mislead you. For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ. And they will mislead many" (vs.4-5).

Before the advent of Jesus and his ministry, there had been a number of people that came describing themselves as the savior of humanity and of national Israel. Jesus was, in essence, telling them that they could expect to see more false Christ's that would deceive people in the future.

"But you will begin to hear of wars, and rumors of wars, but see that you are not troubled. For these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will be raised against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, plagues, and earthquakes in many places. But these are the beginning of sorrows" (vs.6-8).

We must remember that Jesus gave this prophecy during one of those rare periods in human history when there was relative peace throughout the world, which is why he places these statements in the future tense.

These things are just the beginning of a period of sorrow upon the earth and probably have been going on for a long time. It is therefore logical to assume that, because these same things are contained in the second, third, and fourth seals, what Christ said to his disciples was also meant to be understood by future generations of his followers who would live after he opened these three seals containing these same events.
"Then they will deliver you up to affliction and will kill you; and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And many will be offended, and they will deliver up one another, and will hate one another" (vs.9-10). See also Mk.13:9.

Verses 9-10 clearly refer to the events contained in the fifth seal. In these verses we see a clear reference to the martyrdom of the servants of God because they hold the testimony of Jesus Christ. And some of those called to partake in the first resurrection will be viewed as betraying the faith.

"And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness shall have been multiplied, the love of many will grow cold. But the one that endures to the end, that one will be saved" (vs.11-13).

Verses 11-13 show a progressive prophecy that continues past John's time and into the very end of the age, ending at the first resurrection. Again, Christ warns of the rise of people who will teach a false religious system of worship that is in opposition to that of his Father's. Because of the increasing wickedness in the world, many will fail in their calling to salvation; only those who continue to be faithful will be saved.

By B.L. Cocherell
THE FOUR HORSEMEN

There are four major points to keep in mind as we study the first four seals that are opened before Christ's return:

• These four mysterious riders and their horses are all sent forth by Jesus Christ to do his Father's will in initiating an end to human rule on earth.

• Some of the things that are mentioned as a part of seals 2, 3, and 4, such as war, civil strife, the high cost and the scarcity of food, famine, and death from wild animals seem to be common occurrences of the human experience. However, in the context of these three seals, these common occurrences are not the things noted as being controlled by the riders of the red, black, and pale-green horses.

• The responsibilities of these four riders and the events and conditions that they cause do not seem to be tied to any specific event, narrow time period, or specific point in time. After the introduction of the events and conditions caused by these four riders, these riders seem to continue through history with no indicated termination point. Therefore, it seems logical that these horsemen will continue to ride until a time just before Christ returns.

• Although it is Jesus Christ who sends forth these riders, Satan and his cohorts use the circumstances and events caused by these riders, as tools to continue to deceive humanity and to help bring about Satan's one-world governmental and religious system, which will rule the earth in the end of the age.

THE RIDER OF THE WHITE HORSE

The first of the four horsemen is probably the most important to the elect of God because he is the only rider that specifically pertains to them and their relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ:

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures, like a sound of thunder, saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse! and the one sitting on it had a bow. And a crown was given to him, and he went out overcoming, and that he might overcome" (Rev. 6:1-2 Para.).

It is Christ who opens the first seal of the scroll that contains the events that will lead to his return and the end of human rule on earth. This is important to the elect because it demonstrates that Jesus Christ is the one who orchestrates all of the events that will take place during the end of the age.
We are not told who the first rider is, why he has a bow, why he is given a crown, or what he is to conquer. In order to gain any understanding into who this mysterious rider is and what his responsibilities are, it is imperative to use logical deduction predicated on the meanings of the Greek words used in this prophecy, along with scriptural analogies and historical information.

The White Horse

The color white is frequently symbolic of purity and righteousness. Christ, his angelic host, and the elect are often pictured as being clothed in white. When Christ returns to conquer the earth, he and his vast army will be clothed in white and riding upon white horses:

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war" (Rev.19:11 KJV).

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Rev.19:14 KJV).

See Dan.7:9; 12:10; Matt.28:1-3; Mk.9:1-3; Rev.3:4-5; 19:8.

Some feel the color white is symbolic of Satan's religious deception; however, this is highly unlikely because the color white is never mentioned in the same context with false religion or evil spirits.

THE BOW AND THE CROWN

Because the rider of the white horse is given a bow and a crown, understanding the symbolic meaning of these two items sheds light on what the rider's mission is and how it is to be accomplished.

The Bow

Although there are many scriptures that speak of God's wrath and Judgement being as arrows aimed against the wicked of the world and against rebellious Israel, there are also references that show God using arrows shot from a bow to take corrective measures against his elect children in order to awaken them to their sinful condition and their need for repentance.

Deuteronomy

In a prophecy concerning the end of the age, the Creator God says that he will punish his people for their rebellion and send his arrows upon them:

"For a fire has been kindled in my anger, and it burns to the lowest Sheol, and consumes the earth and its produce; and sets fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap evils upon them, I will use my arrows on them. I will send on them exhaustion by famine, and desolation by burning heat, and bitter destruction . . ." (Deut.32:22-24 Para.).
Job

Job laments that God and his truths cause him great distress when there is disharmony between himself and God:

"For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; their fury is drinking my spirit; the terrors of God are set against me" (Job 6:4 Para.).

David

As he reflects upon his errors in judgment and behavior before God, King David asks God to have mercy on him when he errs. He speaks of God's truths as arrows that strike deep within his inner being and cause mental agony and sorrow:

"O Lord do not rebuke me in your wrath, and do not chasten me in your fury. For your arrows sink in me, and your hand presses heavily upon me" (Psa.38:1-2 Para.).

Jeremiah

Jeremiah speaks of God's punishment upon his children because of their rebellion and lack of love and zeal toward him. Jeremiah says that God's arrows pierce deep into the very being of the rebellious, and he speaks of the love with which God receives those who repent of their wickedness and want to have a harmonious relationship with him:

"He has deflected my ways, and has torn me to pieces; he made me desolate. He has bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He has caused the sons of the quiver to enter into my inward parts" (Lam.3:11-13 Para.).

"It is by the kindness of the Lord that we are not destroyed, for his mercies will never fail" (Lam.3:22 Para.).

Cause No Harm

Although the rider of the white horse has a bow, which is a weapon used for killing, there is no indication that his bow is used for this purpose. This is important, because neither of the next two prophecies associated with this rider indicate that he is sent to harm people, unlike the riders of the red, black, and pale-green horses. The lack of any evidence that this rider is sent to harm people is an indication that he is sent for a far different purpose from the other three riders.

A Crown

The English word crown used in Revelation 6:2 is from the Greek word *stephanos*, which normally refers to the laurel wreath that is placed upon the head of someone who is victorious in an athletic event.

It is interesting that the Greek word *diadema*, which normally denotes a crown of authority or rulership, was not used to describe the headdress given to the rider of the white horse. It is also interesting that none of the other horsemen wear a crown.
Because this rider bears the victorious crown of an athlete, it seems logical that the crown is symbolic of one or more of the following: Meeting a challenge and being victorious; one who, in some way, has the responsibility for the event in which the crown is given as a prize; one who is responsible for keeping the crown safe, and/or has the authority to present a crown to those who are victorious.

**Overcoming**

The last phrase in Revelation 6:2, which is translated into English as *overcoming, that he might overcome*, and *conquering and to conquer* (KJV) is an interpretation of the Greek word *nikao*, which can mean to *conquer, overcome, prevail, or obtain victory*. There is no inference in this text that the rider of the white horse goes forth to make war or cause harm. Because this rider is given a *stepanos* (laurel wreath) instead of a *diadema* (crown of authority) it seems that the word *nikao* is a continuance of the thought of victory, as in an athletic event or some other type of situation in which one must win in order to be given the victor's crown.

The apostle Paul often spoke of the process of overcoming as analogous to a foot race, wherein there are only winners and losers. In speaking of his ministry of the gospel and how those who were called to partake of it should strive to control their lives in order to obtain an eternal reward, he says the following:

"Do you not know that those running in a stadium indeed all run, but only one receives the prize? So run in such a way that you may obtain the prize" (1.Corr.9:24 Para.). See also Gal.2:2-5; Phil.2:16; 3:14; Heb.12:1.

There are many scriptures that speak of the elect of God being given a crown of life (Jms.1:12; Rev.2:10) and rulership (Dan.7:27; Rev.2:26-27) as a reward for their overcoming the flesh and living a righteous life before the Father. There are also many warnings about losing one's rewards (one's crown) through neglect and/or sin. Therefore, it is likely that the crown of the first rider has something to do with Jesus Christ, the first victor over the flesh. This crown is probably also associated with the elect of God in their process of overcoming in order to obtain the crown of life.

It is important to point out that Christ is the one whom the Father has authorized to care for his earthly sons and to reward those who overcome the flesh with the crown of life. See Jn.6:33-40; 10:27-30; 17:2.

**The Process of Overcoming**

If the rider of the white horse has anything to do with or is in support of the overcoming process concerning the elect of God, it is important to discuss a major obstacle in this process. There are many aspects to the process of overcoming, such as overcoming the pulls of the flesh and the world, as well as wrong attitudes and behaviors. During this overcoming process, there is a major danger of which one must continually be aware,
in order to not compromise one's effort to be victorious over evil. This danger has to do with falling prey to religious deception and being led away from the truth of God and his ways. Jesus says the following about this danger:

"Jesus answered them and said, See that no one mislead you. For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ. And they will mislead many" (Matt.24:4-5 Para.).

"And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness shall have been multiplied, the love of many will grow cold. But the one that endures to the end, that one will be saved" (Matt.24:11-13 Para.). See also Jer.29:8-9; Eph.5:6; Col.2:8; 2.Thes.2:7-8.

Although it seems clear that the rider of the white horse does not come to destroy or cause harm, there is a great and powerful spirit-being that does come to destroy humanity, and especially the elect of God:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, walks about as a roaring lion seeking those he may destroy" (1.Pet.5:8 Para.).

Being keenly aware of religious deception is extremely important to one who is seeking to worship the true God.

**Satanic Deception**

Satanic deception has been occurring for centuries. Many have said that Jesus is the Christ, but they do not preach what he taught; they preach a gospel of disobedience to the laws of God. A good example of this are the multitudes of quasi-christians who profess to follow Christ, but do not obey the laws, precepts, and principles that he taught.

Satan is the Great Deceiver and there is no doubt that his activities are on the increase. He does not want any to believe the truth of God or to understand God's plan for humanity. It is also clear that this powerful evil spirit has already been deceiving most of the world religiously, philosophically, and politically:

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, that deceives the whole world" (Rev.12:9 KJV).

It is also apparent that Satan has a vast following of people comprised of organized churches and ministers through whom he deceives many people:

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2.Cor.11:13-15 KJV).
**Judgement Upon the Elect of God**

The rider of the white horse has a bow with which to shoot arrows, which are symbolic of the discipline process God uses to help his children grow toward spiritual maturity. Moreover, the crown that this rider wears is symbolic of one who is victorious in some sort of contest or endeavor. Therefore, it seems highly likely that one of the responsibilities of this rider has to do with the elect of God in their effort to grow into spiritual maturity and gain salvation.

Peter says Judgement must begin with those who have been called to repentance during the gospel age of salvation. Why? It is because they, above all other people on earth, have been called first to become sons of the Father's new creation and have been allowed to know and understand the plan and purpose that he has for humanity. Therefore, the Father holds them accountable for this awesome opportunity and responsibility:

"Because the time has come to begin the judgement from the house of God, and if first begins with us, what will be the end of the ones disobeying the gospel of God?" (1.Pet.4:17 Para.).

**The Righteous and Ancient Israel**

The scriptures clearly show that the Creator God (the God who became Jesus Christ) always warned his people before any major punishment of the wicked. We see such warning given to and through Noah, Abraham, Lot, and Moses. God constantly reprimanded ancient Israel (God's chosen people) for their evil ways and encouraged them to repent so that he could bless them.

The scriptures clearly show that, when Israel rebelled against God, he would warn them of an impending punishment if they did not repent. When they continued to rebel, he would send armies to kill them, conquerors to place them into captivity, sickness to come upon them, and many other types of punishment. Why did he do this? He did this to get their attention and to show them the consequences of breaking their covenant with him.

The Creator God reprimanded and punished his chosen people of ancient Israel; therefore, why should we think it strange or out of place that the Father would have his Son do the same kind of things in regard to his spiritual sons (the elect) who are promised far greater rewards than those under the first covenant with ancient Israel?

**The Purging of Wheat**

"I indeed baptize you with water to repentance: but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the holy spirit and fire. Whose winnowing fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his threshing floor, and gather his wheat into the barn; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt.3:11-12 Para.).
Here, John refers to three kinds of baptism—water, holy spirit, and fire—and the separating of wheat from the chaff. The baptism with fire indicates severe trial and testing. The separation of the wheat from the chaff refers to the righteous being given access to the Kingdom of God and the wicked having their existence terminated forever—death by fire. See Matt.13:19-30; Isa.28:24-29.

Because wheat is symbolic of the elect of God and John records that Christ will cleans the wheat of impurities, one might ask how are the elect of God purged of impurity?

Although there is only one way that a person can have their sins washed away and forgiven by God the Father (i.e., through the blood of Christ), there are a number of ways that a person becomes aware that they need to make a change in their attitude and/or behavior. The following are ways in which a person becomes aware that they need to change:

- Through self-examination, study of God's word, and prayer to the Father for the understanding of what his will is in one's life
- Through the normal daily circumstances and experiences of life and an effort to apply God's ways to one's circumstances and experiences
- Through the direct intervention of Jesus Christ on the Father's behalf

Being made aware of one's need to change through God's direct intervention is spoken of in the scriptures as the trial by fire and is the least desirable way to become aware of one's need for change.

It is through the process of growing toward spiritual maturity that the elect are purged of impurity and made fit for the Father's spiritual Family and Kingdom. How easily one proceeds through this process is largely dependent on one's attitude and willingness to grow spiritually.

**Purified and Made White**

"And he said, Go your way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan.12:9-10 KJV). See also Dan.11:35.

Although the wise (the Elect of God) who live during the end of the age will be able to understand prophecies concerning the end of the age, there are also very serious warnings of trials and tests that will come upon them prior to their receiving salvation and entering into the Father's spiritual Family and Kingdom.
Hebrews 12:5-10 Paraphrased

"And you have forgotten the exhortation which he speaks to you as with sons, My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint while being corrected by him. For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines, and whips every son whom he receives. If you endure discipline, God is dealing with you as with sons; for who is the son whom the father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all are to participate in, then you are bastards, and not true sons" (vs.5-8).

The writer to the Hebrews shows that the Father is very concerned that his children mature into spiritual adults. The Father is committed to a process whereby this may be accomplished. But why would Paul describe those who are not disciplined as bastards? In Paul's time, only firstborn sons were entitled to an inheritance from their father; therefore, an illegitimate son (one not truly called to be a son) could not receive an inheritance, nor could the legitimate son if he refused correction:

"Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh as correctors, and we respected them, shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits, and we shall live? For they truly disciplined us for a few days according to the things seeming good to them, but he for our profit, in order for us to partake of his holiness" (vs.9-10).

"I, as many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. Be zealous then, and repent" (Rev.3:19 Para.).

From the beginning of humanity to the advent of Christ, the Patriarchs and all others whom the Father chose to participate in the first resurrection were corrected, tried, and tested by the Creator God (the God who became Jesus Christ) through the experiences of life as they progressed toward spiritual maturity. It is also clear that those of the early church were also corrected, tried, and tested by Jesus Christ (the head of the church). All who follow God's way in the end of the age will also go through this same growth process in order to receive the crown of life.

THE WARNINGS TO THE CHURCHES

God never punishes his people without first giving them ample warning and an opportunity to repent. Those called to repentance and salvation during the gospel age of salvation, above all others, have no excuse for not understanding what the Father expects of them; therefore, extremely serious warnings and corrective measures are used in order to bring about their repentance.

The following are some of the things that Jesus said he will cause to come upon the elect of God who stray from God the Father's way of life and refuse to repent, perform the task they have been called to do, and grow toward spiritual maturity:
1. The Ephesians are warned that unless they repent, Jesus will remove their lamp-stand (the truth of God will be withdrawn from them). The removal of this lamp-stand will result in their spiritual death, and they will not be able to enter the Family and Kingdom of God. See Rev.2:1-7.

2. To Smyrna, Jesus says that he is going to allow Satan to throw them into prison and afflict them. However, if they are faithful they will obtain the crown of life—eternal and immortal life as the Father’s sons. See Rev.2:8-11.

3. Jesus tells those of Pergamos to repent or he will war against them with the sword of his mouth (the truth of God). See Eph.6:17; Heb.4:12-13; Rev.1:16; 2:16.

4. To Thyatira, Jesus says that unless they repent of their idolatry, he will kill them. See Rev.2:20-23.

5. He tells Sardis that if they will not repent, he will sneak up on them as a thief. The implication is that if they do not pay attention, he will remove their crown of life. See Rev.3:1-4.

6. He warns those of Philadelphia to be cautious and hold onto their crown, or someone would take it from them. See Rev.3:11.

7. The Laodiceans are warned that, because of their spiritual laziness, they are going to have to endure severe trials in order to obtain salvation. See Rev.3:17-18.

Remember that the first verse of the Book of Revelation speaks of things that will have their fulfillment shortly after the revelation is given. It is obvious that most of what was revealed did not happen during John’s life or during the centuries that have passed since then. However, some of these things were partly fulfilled as noted in the messages to the seven churches.

It is also evident from what is said about the churches of Philadelphia and Laodicea that they are symbolic of two groups of the elect of God that will exist in the very end of the age, just prior to the return of Christ. Because of the specific information given concerning the seven churches, it becomes clear that the messages to the seven churches contain both literal and prophetic information that applied to John’s day and still applies to those who will live during the end of the age.

It is clear from what Jesus Christ says in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 that he is going to cause severe trials to come upon the elect of God who have the attitudes and behaviors that he details in the messages to the seven churches. Therefore, it seems that the first rider is sent out to the elect of God to encourage them to take seriously the calling and opportunity that they have been given to participate in the first resurrection. And if necessary, this rider is authorized to encourage the elect with trials and persecution.
Who is the rider of the white horse? Perhaps, he is the spirit-being who has the responsibility to oversee the vast host of angelic beings that have been assigned to minister to the elect of God and carry out the instructions of Jesus Christ concerning them and their spiritual growth. See Heb.1:13-14.

The Next Three Horsemen

Although the events and conditions that will be brought about by the next three horsemen have always occurred to one degree or another throughout human history, it is clear that there is something different about these events and conditions as they pertain to the end of the age.

The prophet Ezekiel was a captive in Babylon approximately 127 years after the ten-tribe house of Israel had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians and was being scattered throughout world. Two of the more important prophecies that he recorded (Ezk.5:1-17; 14:1-23) concern the whole of national Israel from that time through the end of the age, and they speak of some of the events that are caused by the riders of the red, black, and pale-green horses.

Although the general context and theme of Ezekiel 14:1-11 is about repentance and forgiveness, which seem to be a part of the first rider's mission, verses 12-23 show many of the events caused by the next three horsemen. Therefore, it would be helpful to read Ezekiel, chapters 5 and 14 as background information for this study.

THE RED HORSE AND ITS RIDER

"And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come and see. And another horse that was red went out. And it was given to the one sitting on it to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another. And a great sword was given to him" (Rev.6:3-4 KJV).

The Red Horse

The Greek word used to describe the color of the red horse is *puresso*, which means fiery red or flame-colored. *Puresso* fits well with the task of this horse's rider, because fire is often symbolic of God's wrath, his warring angels, death, and destruction.

The Rider

The second horsemen is given the responsibility to remove peace from the earth, which means the rider's mission is to cause war, whether civil, national, or international. It is apparent that the rider and the red horse represent violent conflict and war between people that results in massive death.

The rider of the red horse seems to be a powerful angelic being who has the power and authority to influence and/or exert control over economic, political, racial, ethnic and other relationships among humans in order to bring about conflict and war among the earth's population.
Conflict and War

When Jesus was asked by his disciples when the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed and what the sign of his coming to rule and the end of the age would be, he answered:

"And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." (Matt.24:6-7 KJV).

To the casual reader, Jesus' prediction of wars, rumors of wars, and the other things he mentions would not necessarily seem so extraordinary or out of place in the human experience. Throughout human history there has been very little true peace on earth. Wars and rumors of wars are the norm, not the exception in the human experience.

So, what makes these events different from the normal course of events that can be expected in the human experience? The answer is that, after Jesus revealed to John things that were to come to pass before his return, he began to intervene in human affairs by opening the first four seals and sending forth the four horsemen to begin the process of preparing the earth's population and the elect of God for his return. Remember that all of the horrible things recorded in Matthew 24:1-8 were only the beginning of sorrows.

The Rider's Sword

The Greek word used to describe the sword given to the rider of the red horse is *macharia*, which is the short battle sword used by a soldier. The curious thing is that this sword is described by the Greek word *megas*, which means *exceedingly great*. This is no ordinary sword; it is a sword that has the potential of causing great harm and it is wielded by a spirit-being that already has the authority to remove peace from the earth and bring about the conditions of continual conflict and war among the earth's population.

Because the rider already has the authority to cause humans to kill each other in armed conflict, the great sword must have some other meaning. There is an extreme possibility that this rider also has the authority to inflict death upon the unrepentant of the elect, ending their physical life and any hope of salvation. If this is one of the meanings of the rider’s sword, death from this sword would indeed be greater than could be inflicted by an ordinary sword, because the result would be the second death, which is eternal. See Rev.21:8.

Jesus Came to Bring Conflict

Although Jesus Christ is a god of peace like his heavenly Father, Christ is also a god of war (Isa.41:1-5; Psa.58; Heb.12:6-7; Rev.3:19). Contrary to what many believe, when the Creator God came to earth as the Messiah, he did not come to make this world a better place in which to live under its present leadership:
"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Matt.10:34-35 Para.).

The sword noted in Matthew 10 is symbolic of spiritual division and separation, and it is God the Father's word and truth concerning the reason for all of humanity's ills and God's solution to remove these ills through his good news message. It is this truth that cuts deep into the heart of each individual and causes a division and a separation between those who believe the Father's truth and those who do not. This sword is not the same one that the rider of the red horse bears. See Eph.6:17; Heb.4:12-13.

Although the rider of the red horse is sent by Jesus Christ to plague humanity with conflict and war in preparation for his coming rule, it appears that Satan is allowed to use these same tools to establish his political and religious rule, which will result in untold misery and torment to all those who oppose him.

THE BLACK HORSE AND ITS RIDER

"And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come and see, and I saw, and behold, a black horse, and one sitting on it had a balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and do not harm the oil and the wine" (Rev. 6:5-6 Para.).

The Black Horse

The color black and shades of black are symbolic of the approach of foreboding, mourning, terror, impending death, or punishment. See 1.Kgs.18:45; Job 3:5; Isa.50:1-3; Jer.4:28; Lam.4:8; Jude 13; Rev.6:12.

The Rider

The rider of the black horse seems to have three tasks and/or responsibilities. He is the keeper of a set of balances, he controls the price of wheat and barley, and he is instructed not to harm oil and wine.

The Balances

The Greek word zugos is translated into the English word balance, which can mean a set of balance scales or a yoke, as in figuratively being under the yoke of another or yoked to something.

Some feel that the word zugos indicates the scarcity of food and its careful distribution. However, there is another explanation, which seems to have at least as much or even more validity.
The balance could very well be applied to the elect of God and those who are to be called to salvation during the gospel age, because balances are used throughout the Bible to depict the process of being judged as a righteous or unrighteous person, and surely the end of the age is one of the greatest periods of judgement to come upon those whom the Father has called to salvation. Even the symbolic use of the word zugos in Matthew 11:29-30 seems to indicate that being under the yoke of Christ comes with the certainty that one will be weighed and judged in the balance of God's law.

The apostle Peter says that those who are of the Sovereign Father's earthly family are in the process of being evaluated as to their compliance to the gospel:

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1.Pet.4:17 KJV). See also Ezk.9:1-11.

Below are a few of the many references to being weighed in God's balances:

"Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my integrity" (Job 31:6 KJV).

"All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weighs the spirit" (Pro.16:2 KJV).

"A just weight and balance are the Lord's: all the weights of his bag are his work" (Pro.16:11 KJV). See also Isa.26:7.

"You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting" (Dan.5:27 KJV).

The Wheat and Barley

"A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny" (Rev.6:5-6 KJV).

The word measure is translated from the Greek word choenix, which means a dry measure equal to about a quart. The word penny is translated from the Greek word denarii, and when this prophecy was given to John, it seems that a denarii was still the amount of a full day's pay for common labor. Therefore, the indication is that the cost of basic foods is very expensive during the fulfillment of this prophecy.

There is little doubt that, while this rider fulfills his task, some people will suffer a scarcity of food and perhaps die of famine. Although this scarcity of food is the result of the direct intervention into human affairs by Jesus Christ, there are many other reasons that can cause these conditions.
The historical record shows that even in times of abundant harvest and food surplus, there are always places where conditions of famine exist. Aside from natural causes, such as adverse weather conditions, insect infestation, and plant disease, the primary reasons for famine are politics, religion, and warfare.

**Political Control**

The Book of Revelation indicates that there will be an abundance of food from now through the end of the age when the final trumpet plagues are poured out on the Beast system. One major cause of famine in the end-time will be the control of the world's natural resources, economies, and monetary systems by the alliance of nations called the Beast.

In the context of the Beast system, it is easy to see how the price and distribution of ordinary food commodities could be manipulated in order to maintain control over people. See Rev.18:6-16.

**Evil Religious Systems**

When one analyzes the various religions of the world with an open mind, it becomes clear that many are major contributors to famine, disease, and unnecessary death on earth. The success of any religion lies in its ability to control the minds of its subjects. The Book of Revelation tells us that, in the end of this age, an evil religious system will control the minds of the majority of humanity. This satanic mind-control will be devastating to the inhabitants of the earth, both mentally and physically.

One of India's major religions teaches that people's spirits are reincarnated. And this reincarnation can be in the human or animal form, such as a dog, a rat, an insect, or a cow. Reincarnation is seen as a process of reaching a state of perfection; therefore, all animal life must be respected. Because this religion teaches that all animals and insects including those that destroy the food supply and spread disease must not be killed, this religion directly contributes to the mental and physical devastation of those who practice it.

Many people are starving to death in the nation of India, despite the fact that India has some of the most fertile land in the world. This is a sad commentary on its religious practices. Each of the approximately two hundred million 'sacred' cows consume enough resources to feed many people. If the people of India would stop feeding these cows and start using them as food, India's food supply would be increased to the point that they would have enough surplus food to supply one billion, four hundred million people—more than one fourth of the world's entire population!

It should be obvious to any logical person that religion is a major cause of lack of food in India.
Warfare

Warfare is expensive. Any nation that is waging war must spend a large part of its wealth and food supplies on the military; therefore, warfare contributes to a lack of food. Warfare not only destroys productive land and the people who work it but also dramatically reduces available equipment, money, and other resources that are necessary to sustain food production.

Ancient and Modern Israel

In Leviticus 26:26 and Ezekiel 4:16, there are parallel prophecies to Revelation 6:6 that also speak of selling bread by weight. These two prophecies concern the shortage of food and the selling of it by weight as a punishment for Israel's breaking of their covenant with God and rebellion against him. The prophecies of Leviticus 26:1-46 seem to have contemporary, ongoing, and end of the age applications, but the prophecies of Ezekiel 4:1-17 are clearly for the end of the age.

The Wine and the Oil

The instruction to keep from harming the oil and the wine makes little sense in the context of crop damage. Why not spare apples or some other food item? It seems that the rider is forbidden to damage these two food items because they need to be available in sufficient quantities for a specific purpose or they are symbolic of something that has a prophetic, physical, or spiritual meaning.

Perhaps this instruction to the rider hints at a similar protection as the one provided to the olive groves and vineyards around Jerusalem during the Roman siege of 66-70 A.D., or perhaps, the instruction has to do with the protection of the end-time temple and its worship services, which use oil and wine in the sacrifices. The protection of these items might also have to do with the feasts of oil and wine mentioned in the temple scroll.

Nevertheless, a likely explanation that has to do with the biblical symbolism of oil and wine concerns the elect of God. Wine is sometimes symbolic of blood, and oil is sometimes symbolic of God's anointing. If these refer to the blood (life) of the elect and their oil (their spiritual power), the instruction to the rider would make sense; in that, the rider would be prohibited from interfering with the work of the elect in the end of the age.

THE PALE-GREEN HORSE AND RIDER

"And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold, a pale green horse, and the name of the one sitting on it was Death; and Hades followed after him. And authority was given to them over the fourth of the earth to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth" (Rev.6:7-8 Para.). See also Ezk.14:21.
The Horse

The pale-green horse whose rider is named Death causes death through starvation and violence; therefore, the pale horse seems to be symbolic of violent, slow death.

The Rider

As a result of the second and third seals, perhaps millions will have already died, and the final horseman whose name is Death has the authority over one fourth of the earth to kill people with sword, famine, and wild beasts.

The Rider's Name

Notice that this rider has the same function as the messenger of death who killed the first born of Egypt and is mentioned in a number of scriptures as God's destroying angel. See Ex.12:23; 1.Chron.21:12; Job 15:20-22.

Death's Dominion

The text is unclear as to whether Death's sphere of influence encompasses one fourth of the earth's population or one fourth of the earth's geographical area. Whichever is his sphere of influence, the number of people that will be killed by Death might be in the billions.

Death's Weapons

This rider carries a different type of sword from the second rider. His sword is called rhomphaia in Greek, which means a spear or a two-edged sword with which to pierce. It is important to note that, unlike the rider of the red horse who caused people to kill themselves in conflict, Death himself uses this sword to kill people. It seems that this sword is symbolic of his authorization to take life at his discretion in order to carry out his assignment.

Death has control of all of the various things that cause famine to occur on earth. Moreover, he has the power to influence nature or conditions of wild beasts in order to cause them to attack and kill humans.

The End Result

From what is said about the rider Death, he is not sent to encourage people to repent of their sins; he is probably sent to reduce the population of the descendants of Abraham (Arabs and Israelites) in preparation for the return of Jesus Christ. Death's sole purpose is to kill people.
CONCLUSION

World events clearly show that we are in the end of the age and that the "Four Horsemen" have been riding and causing destruction throughout much of the earth for centuries and will continue to ride in the end of the age.

When studying the Book of Revelation, one can see that the Four Horsemen are but the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the plagues and destruction that will come upon the earth because of people's refusal to obey the true God.

By B.L. Cocherell

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THE FIFTH SEAL

The fifth seal seems to be opened at a point in time when there is a major change in the direction and intensity of the work of the Four Horsemen and the intervention of Jesus Christ into human affairs. Although understanding the meaning of the fifth seal is not too difficult, there are some foundational things about the human creation that are important to know prior to analyzing this seal.

The Physical Life Force

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: . . . Therefore I said to the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, . . . For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof . . . " (Lev.17:11-14 KJV).

Today, we understand that the heart circulates the blood throughout the body and sustains the physical body.

Body and Spirit

The Bible describes two major events that take place at the death of a human being. These events are extremely important to the final outcome of the individual's future existence.

1. At death, the physical body that is made from the elements of the earth ceases all functions including cerebral functions; there is no more thought process, no memory, no knowledge, and no access to this world. Death terminates the individual's interaction with this physical dimension of existence.

2. The spirit that is composed of material from the spirit dimension of existence returns to God the Father and is stored with him to await its resurrection. See Jn.5:24-29; Heb.6:2.

"Then the dust shall return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it" (Ecc.12:7 Para.).

Revelation 6:9-11 Paraphrased

"And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those having been slain for the word of God, and for the witness which they had" (v9).

Here, John sees a representation of righteous individuals who have been martyred for their obedience to God and his way of life. The phrase word of God (Greek: 'logos theos') is sometimes used to describe the Creator God who became Jesus Christ as well as the proclamations and literal words of God. The text is unclear as to which is meant. However, because both meanings are, in essence, representative of God, this phrase does not change the context, basic concepts, or thoughts in verse 9.
Beginning with righteous Abel and continuing throughout human history, the righteous have been persecuted and murdered for their belief, practice, and witness of God and the truth of God.

The Spirits Cry Out

"And they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, holy and true Master, do you not judge and take vengeance for our blood, upon those dwelling upon the earth?" (v10).

Here, we see the lives of the righteous dead whose spirits have been returned to the Father from their earthly bodies. Although the spirits under the altar are unconscious, and unaware of anything happening on earth or anywhere else, they symbolically cry out for justice to be done and for God to avenge their deaths upon the wicked. See also Gen.4:10; Heb.11:4.

"And there was given to each one a white robe. And it was said to them that they should rest yet a little while, until it came to pass that their fellow-servants and brothers who were about to be killed as they were, had been killed" (v11).

Each of these righteous individuals who has been martyred throughout the centuries is symbolically given a white garment to show that each has obtained a position and reward in the Family and Kingdom of God. However, they are to rest a little while longer because another phase of God's plan is about to commence that will cause more of the elect to be martyred. But what could cause another major martyrdom of the elect of God?

When we review what Jesus said to his disciples about the end of the age, it becomes clear that the later martyrdom spoken of in the fifth seal is to occur at the very end of the age, and it probably will begin about four years before the return of Jesus Christ. This martyrdom will be brought about by the preaching of the true gospel message:

"And they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Matt.24:9 KJV). See also Mk.13:9,13; Lk.21:12-16; Jn.16:2.

"And I saw thrones and they that sat upon them. And judgement was given to them, and the lives of the ones having been beheaded because of the witness of Jesus, and because of the word of God, and who had not worshiped the Beast nor its image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and in their hand..." (Rev.20:4 Para.).

By B.L. Cocherell
"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair; and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places" (Rev. 6:12-14 KJV).

The sixth seal portrays the violent collapse of the old order of things and seems to follow the general order in which the earth was made fit for humanity's habitation (i.e., the earth, sun, moon, stars, sky, land and sea).

"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who will be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:15-17 KJV).

At this time, many of those who have heard the gospel message proclaimed will come to realize that what they have heard about the wrath of God being poured out upon those who refuse to repent is absolutely true and that their days are numbered. Therefore, in great terror and apprehension, they will try to hide from the punishment that they know is imminent.

Between the Sixth and Seventh Seals

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, or on the sea, or on any tree" (Rev. 7:1 KJV).

Here, we see four angelic beings holding back the four winds. In this verse, the English word winds is translated from the Greek word anemos, which does not define winds as such; rather, it refers to the four cardinal points from which the winds blow, not necessarily the physical wind itself. It is highly possible that the four winds described as anemos are in fact the four spirit-beings of Zechariah 6:5 who are described as the winds of heaven.

"And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea" (Rev. 7:2 KJV).
Here, we see another spirit-being coming from the East, which is traditionally the direction from which divine manifestations come (Isa.41:1-2; Ezk.43:2-3; Mal.4:1-2). This spirit-being instructs the four other powerful spirit-beings to forestall their mission to destroy the earth, the sea, and the unrepentant wicked of earth's population. Moreover, this spirit-being has the seal of the living God with which he and those who are with him are to seal the servants of God as noted in verse 3:

"Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev.7:3 KJV).

It is interesting that it is mentioned two times that these four beings hold back the four winds from harming the earth, sea, and trees (trees are often symbolic of people), and that the earth, sea, and the trees are mentioned a total of three times (Rev.7:1,3).

The number two is often used in the Bible to symbolize division, difference, or separation, and the number three is often symbolic of divine fulfillment, perfection, or completeness. The symbolic meanings of these two numbers fit very well in the prophetic order of the process for the destruction of the earth, the sea, and the wicked people of the earth.

The Great Sealing

"And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel" (Rev.7:4 KJV).

There are two distinct groups of people sealed: a group of 144,000 individuals drawn from among the tribes of Israel and those who come out of the great tribulation. These people are to be protected from the destruction that will come upon the world after the release of the four winds.

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and languages, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; . . . And one of the elders said to me, What are these who are arrayed in white robes? and where did they come from? And I said to him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev.7:9, 13-14 KJV Para.).

The 'great multitude' will be drawn from among all the other peoples of the earth who will come through great trials and will be found worthy to be granted salvation. They will have repented of their sins and will have been found worthy to participate in the first resurrection and at the return of Christ, they will be changed into spirit-beings.
With the sealing of the servants of God, it is highly likely that the gospel age of salvation will have ended, and the full fury of God's wrath will be poured out upon the earth and will not cease until Christ and his army of spirit-beings conquer the Beast power and the earth.

The Angel With the Inkhorn and Seal

The prophet Ezekiel was given a vision of the end of the age in which he saw the abominations that the houses of Israel and Judah and their civil and religious leaders were committing in the sight of God. In this same vision, he also saw the sealing of the elect in Jerusalem against the wrath of God:

"Then he said to me, Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them" (Ezk.8:17-18 KJV).

God's patience toward national Israel will come to an end and he will no longer sit quietly by while they commit their abominations and idolatry before him. He will punish them without mercy for their rebellion and wickedness.

Ezekiel 9:1-11 KJV

"He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city [Jerusalem] to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand: and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar" (vs.1-2).

Here we see the avenging army of Jesus Christ being gathered to begin to a great slaughter among humanity. Notice that, among these six men, there is one man who has a writer's inkhorn.

In the following verses, Jesus Christ calls to the one with the inkhorn and instructs him to go to those in Jerusalem and mark the servants of God who are heart-broken because of the evil that they see. From the description of what the one with the inkhorn does and who he is to mark, it is highly likely that he is the same one spoken of in Revelation 7:2-3:

"And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the Lord said to him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof" (vs.3-4).
The other five who are standing by are told to follow the one with the inkhorn and begin the slaughter among the inhabitants of Jerusalem who have not been marked for survival by the one with the inkhorn.

"Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house. And he said to them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go you forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city" (vs.6-7).

"And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord God! will you destroy all the residue of Israel in your pouring out of your fury upon Jerusalem? Then said he to me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The Lord has forsaken the earth, and the Lord sees not. And as for me also, mine eye will not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head" (vs.8-10).

The question that Ezekiel asked and the answer that he received tell us that, although the inhabitants of Jerusalem are the primary focus of these angels of death, the rest of the house of Israel and Judah who are scattered among the nations will also be slaughtered by these death angels. It is also clear that this slaughter upon the Houses of Israel and Judah will not stop until all those who are to be killed are killed.

From the point in time when the one with the inkhorn who is clothed in white linen reports, "I have done as you have commanded me" (v.11), the servants of God will be separated from the rest of humanity. God's servants will be protected from his wrath as it is poured out upon the earth, sea, and the wicked, which must be done in order to complete the preparation of the earth for the invasion of Christ and his army of spirit-beings.

By B.L. Cocherell
THE SEVENTH SEAL AND THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

The opening of the seventh seal begins the seven trumpet plagues that lead up to the first resurrection, the wrath of God, the return of Christ with his saints to conquer the earth, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

THE SEVENTH SEAL

"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour" (Rev.8:1 KJV).

We are not told why there is silence in heaven for about one half hour after Jesus Christ opens the seventh seal that contains seven supernatural punishments which will be sent upon the earth and its inhabitants. If we assume that this half hour is in the context of the prophetic day for a year using the sacred lunar calendar (Num.14:34; Ezek.4:6), there would be about 7½ earth days of silence in heaven, according to Revelation 8:1.

The Eight Angels

"And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (Rev.8:2-4 KJV).

Here, we see each of the seven angels standing before God given a trumpet to blow. While they are waiting to blow their trumpets, another angel comes forth and stands at the altar and is given incense and the prayers of the saints, which he offers to God on the altar. Remember that the temple worship system under the first agreement with national Israel was a shadow of heavenly things.

This scene is reminiscent of the high priest in the earthly temple offering incense to God, and it seems to be connected to the thanksgiving of the saints and their request to the Father that he send his Son to rule the earth (Matt.6:9-13). Also see Psa.141:1-2; 1.Pet.3:12; Rev.5:8.

"And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightning, and an earthquake" (Rev.8:5 KJV).

After presenting the incense and the prayers to God, the angel reaches down and fills his censer with the fire from the altar. Normally, the censer was used to present something that smelled sweet to God. It was also used as an act of worship and supplication for God's mercy and/or intercession on behalf of his people. Here, we see the censer is symbolic of judgment (fire is symbolic of a purification agent and punishment).
Notice that Ezekiel's vision in chapter 10 parallels what John saw concerning the angel and the fire from the altar in Revelation 8:5:

"Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. And he spoke to the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill your hand with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. And he went in my sight. Now the cherubim stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house: and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory. And the sound of the cherubim's wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaks. And it came to pass, that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubim; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels. And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubim to the fire that was between the cherubim, and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen: who took it, and went out" (Ezk.10:1-7 KJV).

The city referred to in Ezekiel's vision is Jerusalem (Ezk.9:8-9), which will receive the wrath of God as symbolized by the fire from the altar.

After filling the censer, the angel of Revelation 8:5 will cast it to the earth. As this fire of God or the energy that it represents enters the earth from the spirit dimension, there will be a tremendous earthquake along with thunder and lightning as the physical dimension is torn apart prior to the sounding of the first trumpet. See Gen.19:16-25.

The Seven Angels Prepare

"And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound" (Rev.8:6 KJV).

The seven angels prepare to blow their trumpets to announce and send forth seven specific plagues that will devastate the earth and terrify its population. All this must be done in preparation for the first and second return of Jesus Christ.

The First Angel Sounds

With the blowing of the first trumpet, comes a plague upon the earth that is taken directly from the altar in heaven. But why is this plague taken from the altar? Remember that the fifth seal symbolically shows the martyred saints crying out for God to avenge their deaths. The taking of the plague from the altar seems to indicate that God is honoring this request by sending forth the first of the next fourteen plagues that are to be poured out upon the earth and its inhabitants:
"The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mixed with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the trees were burnt up, and all the green grass was burnt up" (Rev.8:7 Para.).

Here, we see hail and fire mixed with blood raining upon the earth. This is reminiscent of the hail and fire that was poured out on the Egyptians for their refusal to release the Israelites. See Ex.9:22-26. The ancient Israelites were spared from the plague of hail and fire, just as God's chosen will be spared from the coming hail, fire, and blood (Rev.7:3-4, 9, 13-14).

In this first plague, a third of all the grass and trees will be burned up. A fire this size will cause tremendous problems in the atmosphere and will shroud the earth in a cloud of smoke and ash. The blood that comes along with the hail and fire is both literal and symbolic. It is literal in that it is real blood that will cause disease and other problems as it rots upon the earth, and it is symbolic because it pictures the wrath of God and vengeance for the blood of the saints. See Isa.28:1-8; Ezek.13:9-16; 14:19; 16:38.

The Second Angel Sounds

"And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed" (Rev.8:8-9 KJV).

Here, we see a large flaming object piercing through the atmosphere and crashing into the sea. Whether this flaming object is an angel or the manifestation of his power, a third of the sea where it enters will become blood, a third of the life in the sea will die, and a third of the ships will be destroyed. It also seems very likely that the impact of this large object will cause gigantic tidal waves that will cause massive destruction to coastal cities in that area.

The Third Angel Sounds

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of water; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter" (Rev.8:10-11 KJV).

In this punishment, there is a parallel to the plague upon the Egyptians in Exodus 15:22-25. This star (angel) named wormwood (i.e., bitterness) fulfills God's prophetic promise in Deuteronomy 29:18-20 and Jeremiah 9:13-16 to punish Israel for their rebellion against him and the breaking of the covenant that they had with him. This star (angel) poisons a third of the available drinking water at its source, killing a great number of people. See Ex.7:17-25, Psa.78:44; 105:29.
The Fourth Angel Sounds

"And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise" (Rev.8:12 KJV).

When the fourth angel sounds, a third of the solar, lunar, and stellar radiation will cease to fall upon the earth. Besides causing great terror among the earth's population, a one-third reduction in radiation upon the earth will have an adverse impact upon the earth's temperature and weather, which will cause havoc with agriculture and food production. See Amos 8:9.

The Three Woes

"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!" (Rev.8:13 KJV).

These next three punishments are going to be extremely severe, which is indicated by their being called woes (i.e., sever pain, agony, and physical or mental distress). The sounding of the last three trumpets in this series of punishments will bring about exceptionally devastating events and conditions as each is poured out upon the earth. Remember that the number three is often symbolic of divine fulfillment, perfection, or completeness, and these three woes complete this phase of God's wrath toward the earth and its inhabitants.

The Fifth Angel Sounds

Revelation 9:1-21 KJV

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven to the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit" (vs.1-2).

The fifth angel blasts his trumpet and a star (angel) falls from heaven to earth with the keys and authority to unlock the abyss. Note that this punishment of humanity does not come from God's dimension of time and space, rather, it comes from beneath the earth. As soon as the angel opens up the abyss, thick smoke issues out and obscures the sun causing darkness in that area of the world.

Out of this smoke comes a swarm of strange creatures (see verses 7-10), which have the powerful sting of a scorpion. Notice that they are not to destroy the vegetation of the earth, but their task is to harm all the people who do not have God's protection.
"And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree: but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" (vs.3-4).

Joel graphically describes these events that precede the day of the Lord:

"Blow the trumpet; sound the alarm on Zion, God's sacred hill. Tremble, people of Judah! The day of the Lord is coming soon. It will be a dark and gloomy day, a black and cloudy day. The great army of locusts advance like darkness spreading over the mountains. There has never been anything like it, and there never will be again" (Joel 2:1-2 GNB).

"And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great; for he is strong that executes his word; for the day of the Lord is great; and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel 2:11 GNB). See also Joel 2:3; 11; Rev.9:11.

They Should Torment Them

"And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he strikes a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and will not find it; and will desire to die, and death will flee from them . . .. And they had tails like to scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months" (Rev.9:5-10).

The sting of these creatures will be so severe that a person would rather die than endure the agonizing pain inflicted by these creatures.

"And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew language is Abaddon, but in the Greek language has his name Apollyon" (v11).

We are not told if the angel who released these creatures is the one who controls them; however, we are told that the one who directs their movements is Abaddon or Apollyon (The Destroyer). Thus, he could very well be the same destroying angel of the Exodus.

The Sixth Angel Sounds

"One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates" (vs.12-14).
With the completion of the first woe, the sixth angel blows his trumpet to release the four angels being held at the Euphrates River, which is the eastern border of the land promised to ancient Israel. This also shows destruction coming from the East, but this time a third of humanity will be killed.

"And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like to serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt" (vs.16-19).

Notice what takes place in verse 16. This verse tells us that God is going to use this great army of two hundred million strange looking creatures to kill a third of mankind.

"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts" (vs.20-21).

Even after two-thirds of humanity has been killed by the first and second woes, those who are left still will not believe that it is the Creator God (Jesus Christ) who is torturing and killing them with these supernatural beings; therefore, they will refuse to repent and worship the true God.

The Mystery of God is Finished

Just before the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, another powerful angel will announce that there will be no more delay and that the mystery of God has come to an end.

"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that lives for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he will begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he has declared to his servants the prophets" (Rev.10:5-7 KJV).
Here, we see an angel announcing the end of one phase of God's plan for humanity and the beginning of another. The great mystery he refers to is the plan and purpose of God for creating humanity. It is now time for the next phase in which all of humanity past, present, and future will be given an opportunity to understand this great plan. They also will be given an opportunity to decide whether or not they want to take part in it.

Just before the seventh angel blows the seventh trumpet to announce the third woe, there is a major event that must take place prior to the initiation of these final punishments. Although it is clear that the third woe and the seventh angel who is to blow the seventh trumpet are bound together in their prophetic fulfillment, the first resurrection must take place before the initiation of these final punishments.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

At the end of the sixth punishment and the second woe, as the seventh angel begins sounding his trumpet which announces the last seven punishments for all of humanity, the first resurrection will occur:

"And they heard a great voice from heaven saying to them, Come up here. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven" (Rev.11:12-13 KJV).

Revelation chapter 11 concerns the ministry of the Two Witnesses in the last 3½ years before the first resurrection. Verses 12-13 concern what happens at the resurrection of the two witnesses. This is the time spoken of by Jesus and the apostle Paul in Matthew 24:23-51 and 1.Thessalonians 4:16-17, when Christ sends his angels to collect the elect of God of all ages and remove them from the earth in preparation for his return as the conquering King.

Only Sinners Left on Earth

An important point to remember here is that, after the first resurrection occurs, there will be no humans on the face of the earth with the spirit of God. The elect of God will be with Christ before the throne of God on the Sea of Glass (Rev.15:2-4) waiting to return with him as kings and priests to conquer and rule the earth.

Once this event happens, the sixth punishment, which is the second woe will be finished. After the second woe is completed, it will be time for the seventh angel to announce the seventh punishment, which is the third woe:

"The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe comes quickly" (Rev.11:14 KJV).
The seventh punishment (i.e., the third woe) contains the last seven plagues, which are the most horrible and destructive events that will be poured out on humanity through the wrath of God.

The Seventh Angel Sounds

Revelation 11:15-19 KJV

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he will reign for ever and ever" (v15).

This angel will announce the end of human rule on earth and its imminent invasion by Jesus Christ, the heavenly hosts, and the Sovereign Father’s other firstborn sons (Heb.12:22-23; Jms.1:18) who are at that time priests in the Kingdom of God.

"And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, Saying, We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which are, and was, and are to come; because you have taken to you your great power, and have reigned. And the nations were angry, and your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should give reward to your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear your name, small and great: and should destroy them which destroy the earth" (vs.16-18).

Again, we see that the announcement will be made that Jesus Christ is the ruler of the earth. After this announcement, the only thing that will remain to be done is for him to take physical possession of the earth and its inhabitants.

"And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail" (v19).

As the temple of God in heaven is opened, there will be great atmospheric disturbances around the earth that are accompanied by earthquakes and hail storms. See also Rev.15:5.

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THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

The seven last plagues are the most horrible, terrifying, and destructive of all the plagues which are to be come upon the earth and humanity:

"For then will be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever will be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matt.24:21-22 KJV).

All of humanity will not be destroyed because of the promises God has made to the patriarchs and the elect concerning their inheritance, descendants, rulership, and his future plans for the rest of humanity.

Revelation 15:1, 5-8 KJV

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" (v1).

As a part of the wrath of God and in preparation for the invasion of the earth by Jesus Christ and his vast army, there will be seven last plagues poured out upon the earth. Remember that the nations of the earth will have already been devastated by the preceding punishments announced by angels with the trumpets. But, there will be seven more of these spirit-messengers who will bring even more destruction upon the earth and those who are left alive:

"And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave to the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man [i.e., no one] was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled" (vs.5-8).

God's Wrath Poured Out

Revelation 16:1-21 KJV

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth" (v1).

The First Plague

"And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshiped his image" (v2).
This seems to be a special punishment that is specifically designed for those who have received the mark of the Beast system and worship the image of its leader. These who are to be punished are the servants of this evil political and spiritual system who still refuse to repent and worship the true God after being given the opportunity to repent during the preceding plagues.

The Second Plague

"And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea" (v3).

The effect of all life in the sea dying will be devastating. Without its cleansing effect on the air we breathe, all human and animal life on earth would eventually die.

The Third Plague

"And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, You are righteous, O Lord, which are, and was, and will be, because you have judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink; for they are worthy" (vs.4-6).

As was done during the plague upon Egypt, we see that the source of the rivers will again be turned into blood. However, this time it is not only the rivers but the source of all water that will be turned to blood. This plague has the potential to destroy all human, animal, and plant life on the earth.

A Righteous Judgment

"And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments" (v7).

Why are God's judgments righteous? They are true and righteous because the penalty for sin is death (Rom.6:23) and after the first resurrection, there will only be sinful people left on the planet who are all worthy of death.

The Fourth Plague

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which has power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory" (vs.8-9).

The prophet Isaiah also speaks of a time when the moon and sun will radiate a tremendous amount of heat upon the earth. It is hard to imagine heat of this magnitude striking the earth and the damage that it will cause:
"Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord binds up the breach of his people, and heals the stroke of their wound. Behold, the name of the Lord comes from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: And his breath, as an overflowing stream, will reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there will be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err" (Isa.30:26-28 KJV).

A sevenfold increase in the sun's radiation would immediately ignite all the forests and grasslands and begin to combust and/or vaporize all materials on the earth's surface with a flash point under 600 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Fifth Plague

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain. And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds" (vs.10-11).

Amazingly, there will still be people alive on the planet after the fourth plague; therefore, we can assume that the fourth plague will not last long. The fifth plague is specifically tailored for the geographical area wherein the nations comprising the Beast system are located. See Ex.10:21-23.

Notice that those who sit in darkness are in great pain. Most likely some of this pain is partly due to mental anguish, from injuries sustained in the previous four plagues, and specifically, the plague of sores with which they are still being afflicted. Nevertheless, they will continue to blaspheme God and refuse to turn away from the things that have caused God to punish them.

The Sixth Plague

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared" (v12).

The Euphrates River will be dried up to allow a vast army from the East to cross over it.

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (vs.13-14).
Not only are the evil spirits who lead the nations to the east of the Euphrates River going to gather their forces to fight Jesus Christ as he returns to earth with his army but also they will gather a great military force from among all nations and assemble them in a place called Armageddon to fight Christ:

"And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (v16).

The Seventh Plague

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightning; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give to her the cup of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (vs. 17-20).

Here, we see great atmospheric disturbances and the greatest earthquake in human history shakes the entire earth causing massive destruction on a worldwide scale.

God will remember the evil political, governmental, and religious system of Babylon that caused so much pain, suffering, and agony to humanity. And he will begin the final process whereby he will totally eliminate it and the evil spirits who rule it from the earth.

"And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great" (v21).

This plague contains hailstones that weigh approximately 120 pounds. It is obvious that most things hit by them will be destroyed. Once this final plague is finished, the entire earth will be in shambles; its land will lie ruined, its cities will be destroyed, and its people will be demoralized and living in terror, wondering what horror the next day will bring. Yet, they still will not acknowledge the true God and his Son Jesus Christ and repent of their evil ways; instead, they will curse God for punishing them.

Christ Returns to Conquer

This final plague will lead to the return of Jesus Christ as conquering King and the final destruction of the Babylonian Beast system.
Jeremiah

"A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with the nations; he will plead with all flesh; he will give those who are wicked to the sword, says the Lord. This says the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the farthest parts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth; they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be refuse upon the ground" (Jer.25:31-33 KJV)

Isaiah 13:6-13

"Scream in terror, for the Lord's time has come, the time for the Almighty to crush you. Your arms lie paralyzed with fear; the strongest hearts melt, and are afraid. Fear grips you with terrible pangs, like those of a woman in labor. You look at one another, helpless, as the flames of the burning city reflect upon your pallid faces. For see, the day of the Lord is coming, the terrible day of his wrath and fierce anger. The land shall be destroyed, and all the sinners with it. The heavens will be black above them. No light will shine from stars or sun or moon. And I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sin; I will crush the arrogance of the proud man and the haughtiness of the rich. Few will live when I have finished my work. Men will be as scarce as gold—of greater value than the gold of Ophir. For I will shake the heavens in my wrath and fierce anger, and the earth will move from its place in the skies" (Isa.13:6-13 LBP).

During the seven last plagues, anyone who calls on the Lord will be saved from these terrible plagues, just as ancient Israel was protected from most of the plagues of Egypt:

"Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved; even in Jerusalem some will escape, just as the Lord has promised, for he has chosen some to survive" (Joel 2:32 LBP).

THE INVASION BEGINS

Revelation 19:11-16 KJV

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon it was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns: and he was clothed with a garment that had been dipped in blood: and his name was called The Word of God" (vs.11-13).

In this vision, John sees Jesus Christ in battle dress, ready to invade the earth and make war with the nations who have not heeded the warnings to repent of their wickedness.
"And the armies that were in heaven followed upon white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of his mouth goes forth a sharp sword, that with it he might smite the nations: and he will shepherd them with an iron rod: and he treads the winepress of the anger of God Almighty. And he has on his garment and on his right thigh a name written, King Of Kings, And Lord Of Lords" (vs.14-16).

With the return of Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, a whole new era of peace and prosperity will emerge. From the death and destruction caused by the wrath of God on an evil and corrupt world will come a people who will have the opportunity to live in a great time of peace and prosperity.

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CHRONOLOGICAL FLOW OF THE 7 SEALS

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NOTES AND COMMENTS
CHAPTER
FOURTEEN

THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET

For centuries, the ability to identify the Beast and the False Prophet mentioned in the Book of Revelation has eluded Bible scholars. Now, as the end of this age approaches and Christ's return draws near, many answers concerning the prophetic Beast of Revelation and the False Prophet have been revealed.

Who is the Beast?

The Beast is the leader of a powerful religious and governmental system who controls an alliance of nations called the Beast. This extremely dynamic and charismatic individual is described as a beast because he exhibits the characteristics of a beast as he ruthlessly leads a religious and governmental system.

What is the Beast?

The Beast also identifies the governmental system, that controls an alliance of nations, which will exist for a short time just before Christ returns. The Beast merges religion and government in such a way that it gives those who administer it absolute authority, power, and control over all religious, philosophical, economic, and political aspects of the lives of people who come under its control.

This religious/political system of government has tremendous economic, industrial, military, and spiritual power at its disposal as it seeks to dominate the entire world. It is defined as a beast because it behaves as a powerful predatory animal, killing and destroying as it goes about satisfying its ravenous appetite for power and control.

Who is the False Prophet?

The False Prophet is the spiritual leader of both a powerful and wealthy religion called the Great Whore and the alliance of nations called the Beast. This spiritual leader denies the sovereign authority of God the Father. He also denies that Jesus Christ is the true Son of God and that the gospel proclaimed by the elect is a message from the true God.

This individual is the supreme spiritual leader of all those who submit themselves to the control and will of the Beast system and its leadership. This individual is called the False Prophet (Rev.13:11-12; 19:20) because he promotes a religious system, which is diametrically opposite to the worship system of God the Father and Jesus Christ. This person has tremendous supernatural power, which he uses to deceive and control people into supporting the aims and goals of the Beast system.
Note:

Because of the complexity of the prophecies in the Books of Daniel and Revelation concerning the emergence of the Beast system, its leader, and the False Prophet, we recommend that you read the entire Books of Daniel and Revelation before reading the other sections on this subject.

Understanding Daniel and Revelation

An understanding of the Books of Daniel and Revelation is important because they were recorded for those living in the tumultuous time just before Christ returns. If indeed this is the time spoken of in these two books, an understanding of these prophecies is a matter of life or death.

Although it is interesting to understand the historical fulfillment of the things written in the Books of Daniel and Revelation, this information is not necessary to understand the prophetic overview concerning the who, what, when, and where of these two books.

What is important is that those who are called to salvation and live in the end of the age just before Christ returns are able to recognize the times in which they are living. If one is able to recognize the prophetic meaning of the events recorded in the Books of Daniel and Revelation as they unfold, one should be able to recognize the enemy and not be deceived into making the mistake of worshiping and serving a false god. Being able to recognize these things should also give one a measure of assurance and peace of mind as to the final outcome of the terrifying times spoken of in these prophecies.

The Physical and the Spiritual

As you review this study, it is important to remember that the symbolism recorded in these prophecies pertains to both the physical and spiritual dimensions of existence. It is for this reason that much of the symbolism and references concerning the various beasts and horns do not seem to make sense when applied to the physical realm of existence.

Although the things and events symbolized have an impact upon the earth and its inhabitants, much of what is foretold will be initiated in the spirit realm of existence and then be reflected in individuals and events on earth. Therefore, when analyzing these prophecies, one must keep in mind that events that take place in the spirit realm of existence may or may not be reflected in people and events of the physical realm of existence. Only when these prophecies are viewed in this light will they make sense.

Study Aids

We have provided study aids in the form of tables that correlate the major topics presented in various sections of this chapter to help clarify the interrelationships between the Beast system, its leader, the False Prophet, and events contained within these prophecies. We recommend that you use these tables as guides along with your study of this subject.
The Wise Will Understand

After the prophet Daniel had seen all that he had seen and been told all that he had been told, he still did not understand the things that were revealed to him, because they were revealed for another time and another people to understand:

"And the angel said to Daniel, Go your way Daniel: for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan.12:9-10 Para.). See also Rev.1:1-8; 17:8.

There is no doubt that the prophecies contained in the Books of Daniel and Revelation are extremely difficult to understand. However, God has promised an understanding of these prophecies to those whom he will call to become his sons just before Christ's return. Does this mean that every single person who is called to salvation during the gospel age will have a complete understanding of prophecy? No, it does not mean this. What God has promised is that everyone he calls to salvation during the end of the age will have the amount of understanding necessary for their spiritual needs. However, each individual must do the things that God requires in order to have this understanding. See Eph.1:16-18; 2.Tim.3:16; Jms.1:15; Rev.13:8; 17:8. Therefore, in order to prepare themselves for the events ahead, each individual who is called should make a diligent effort to study and understand what God has caused to be written for their benefit (2.Tim.2:15).

Proof and Speculation

Although we cannot prove beyond doubt that the things we state in reference to the Beast, its leader, the False Prophet and the nations that seem to be involved in these prophecies are true, historical and biblical evidence does seem to support our analysis of the symbolic meaning of the people, nations, and events. It is a fact that biblical prophecies surrounding the events just before Christ's return are primarily focused on the descendants of ancient Israel and the nations associated with them. Moreover, the tribes of ancient Israel and the other ancient nations mentioned in these prophecies are easily identified as nations existing today. We have attempted to explain these important prophecies in a clear, logical, and accurate manner. However, regardless of the accuracy or inaccuracy of the information presented, the events described in the Books of Daniel and Revelation will occur as God's plan for the salvation of humanity goes forward. Please remember as you study this complex subject, that any errors contained herein are human errors and not errors in God's word.

By B. L. Cocherell and Charles E. Barrett
The Prophet Daniel

The prophet Daniel was one of four men taken from among Jewish captives to serve in king Nebuchadnezzar's staff of intellectuals whom he used to advise him in various matters. On one occasion, the king had a troubling dream that he could not remember; therefore, Daniel, whom God had given the ability to interpret dreams and visions was called upon to recall and interpret the king's dream.

This first dream that Daniel interpreted for king Nebuchadnezzar is a major key to unlocking the meaning of the Beast which is both the ten-nation alliance and its leader. Understanding the meaning of this dream is crucial because Nebuchadnezzar and his empire are symbolic of the beast system and its leader that will exist near the end of human rule on earth.

Daniel 2:27-44 Paraphrased

"Daniel spoke before the king and said, The secret which the king has demanded cannot be shown to the king by the wise men, the magicians, the horoscopists, or the fortune-tellers. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and makes known to king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days..." (vs.27-28).

The first thing that we learn from the king's dream is that it was given to him by God in order to reveal events that would transpire in a time called the latter days (i.e., last or final days). The only latter, last, or final days that have any significance concerning humanity in biblical prophecy are the days just before Jesus Christ's return to establish his Father's kingdom over the earth. Therefore, this is the context in which the king's dream must be viewed in order to fully comprehend its significance in understanding the Beast.

The Great Image

"Behold a certain great image! That image stood before you with a brilliant brightness; and its form was dreadful. The head of this image was of fine gold; its breasts and its arms were of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze; its legs of iron, its feet were partly of iron and partly of clay" (vs.31-33).

The image that the king saw was extraordinarily bright and terrifying to look upon and was composed of metals of decreasing value, from a head that is very valuable to feet of less value, and from the weakness of malleable gold to the brittle strength of iron mixed with clay.
The 'You' and the Stone

"You continued until a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces; and became like chaff on the summer threshing floors. And the wind carried them away, so no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain [government] and filled the whole earth" (vs.34-35).

There are several interesting and important things to understand in verses 34 and 35:

1. Who or whatever is referred to as you in verse 34 could not be King Nebuchadnezzar, because by the time this prophecy takes place, the king would have long since died. Because the you is to exist until the stone comes to destroy the image, the implication is that whoever or whatever the you is or was will exist during the last days.

2. The stone cut out without hands is a clear reference to Jesus Christ; therefore, the you and the image will both exist when Christ returns to conquer this entity symbolized by the image.

   The you will continue until the stone strikes the image's feet (i.e., that which supports and moves it about). This Babylonian system of government will be completely erased from the face of the earth and be replaced with the Stone's government—the Kingdom of the true God.

The King of Kings

"This is the dream, we will tell the meaning of it before the king. You, O king, are the king of kings. For the God of heaven and earth has given you the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the honor. And wherever the sons of men, the animals of the field, and the birds of the sky dwell, he has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all. You are the head of gold" (vs.36-38).

Although it is clear that Daniel is speaking to the king, it is also clear that Nebuchadnezzar never ruled the entire earth nor all the life forms that inhabit it. Therefore, this king of kings to which Daniel refers is someone else. Although Jesus Christ is called the King of kings, this prophecy is not speaking of him because he only becomes king of kings at his return and this king of kings was ruling the earth at the time of king Nebuchadnezzar.

The only king of kings who has authority over all the earth until Christ returns to depose him is the present god of this earth, Satan the Devil, who is in authority over all the physical rulers of earth and millions of evil spirits. (Matt.4:8-9; 2.Cor.4:4; Eph.2:2). This is important to keep in mind as we progress through this study, because it is this powerful spirit-being who is the primary motivating force behind all who oppose God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the proclaimers of the gospel message.
The Second and Third Kingdoms

"And in your place shall arise another kingdom [the silver Kingdom] lower than yours, and another third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule in all the earth" (v39).

Here, we see two subsequent kingdoms that rule on the earth, which are both substantially weaker than and inferior to the Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar.

The Fourth Kingdom

"And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron: inasmuch as iron crushes and smashes all things: and as the iron that shatters all these, it will crush and shatter. And as for the feet and toes that you saw, these shall be partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it the strength of iron, because you saw the iron mixed with potters clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron, and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly fragile" (vs.40-42).

The fourth kingdom that will exist during the end of this age is of iron and is supported by a strange mixture of dissimilar materials that reduce its structural/organizational strength. The symbolism of the mixture of iron and brittle fired clay seems to imply that this powerful kingdom is divided in its aims and goals and has a very fragile balance between its weak and strong components.

"And as you saw this iron mixed with the clay of the clay, they shall be mixed with the seed of men: but they shall not adhere to one another, even as iron does not mix with clay" (v43).

The strange statement about the clay of clay not adhering with the seed of men seems to makes no sense in the context of a purely physical world. However, these prophecies are not in this pure context; they are in the context of both the physical and spiritual dimensions of existence. When we view verse 43 in this context, an interesting piece of information can be extracted concerning why there is both great strength and great weakness in this kingdom.

Things to Note

- It is the feet that support the image that the stone (Christ) strikes; therefore, the feet symbolize both the strength and weakness of the image.
- As we will see in verse 44, the feet represent an evil empire/alliance of nations that Christ totally destroys upon his return to establish his Father's government on earth.
The primary thing that made Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon strong, was the evil spirit who is referred to as 'you' and 'king' in verses 34 and 37. This evil spirit made Babylon strong by using its tremendous power to influence and manipulate humans and their physical dimension of existence through other evil spirits under its control. This evil being did this in order to further his own aims and goals for the Babylonian empire.

As we will see in the Book of Revelation, the same spirit-being that ruled the world during the days of the Babylonian empire also rules the alliance of nations called the Beast and its leader called the Beast.

The prophecies clearly show that there is a spirit of partisanship between this alliance of nations portrayed as the feet of clay and iron, and that there are also evil spirits who are pursuing their own agendas through this unsuspecting physical alliance of nations.

Given this information, a logical conclusion to draw is that the feet are composed of some mixture of spirit-beings (the clay of clay) and humans (the seed of men) that cannot stay together because of a conflict that exists between their individual needs and goals.

The Coming Kingdom of God

"And in the days of these kings, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to other people. It shall break in pieces and destroy all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Because you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and it broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold in pieces; the great God has made known to the king what shall occur after this. . ." (vs.44-45).

Notice that it is in the days of this evil alliance of nations that the God of Heaven (Jesus Christ) will set up a government on earth that will be governed by spirit-beings forever. However, prior to establishing his world-ruling government, he will destroy this alliance.

Although Nebuchadnezzar's dream has had a progressive historical fulfillment, his dream also has prophetic duality. Its central focus is on the people and events during a time when a powerful alliance of nations that has a powerful evil spirit leading it will exist. It is during the existence of this evil alliance that Jesus Christ will return to establish his Father's kingdom over the earth.
Important Information

In the list below are several important pieces of information about the king of Babylon and the Babylonian religious/governmental system. This information will help in understanding subsequent prophecies about the alliance of nations called the Beast and its leader that will exist before Christ returns.

- Nebuchadnezzar was the supreme ruler of the vast Babylonian Empire who ruled ruthlessly and without mercy. Because of his arrogance before God, he was sentenced by God to be governed by the mind and emotions of a beast of the field for seven years.
- In the biblical record, Babylon is often symbolic of great sinfulness and a religious system that God condemns as being extremely evil and destructive.
- Babylon was a religious and political system of government steeped in idolatry. Nebuchadnezzar himself had a huge golden image made and forced all those under his control to bow before it and worship it. Refusal to worship his image was punishable by death.

By B. L. Cocherell and Charles E. Barrett

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Many years after his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's vision, Daniel himself was given a prophetic vision from the Creator God concerning the same religious and political system of government.

**Daniel 7:1-28 Paraphrased**

"In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions . . . And behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea" (vs.1-2).

The four winds who stir up the great sea are very likely the four angels mentioned in Revelation 7:1 who are responsible for causing great destruction in the earth and sea.

**The Four Beasts From the Sea**

"And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from another" (v3).

Here, we see four beasts rising out of the sea, and each has distinctly different characteristics, but all come out of the sea during the same time period. Because various bodies of water are sometimes symbolic of people (waters, floods, seas) in biblical prophecy, it is likely that these beasts represent existing nations or alliances of nations. See Isa.57:20.

Because of what the prophetic scriptures say concerning the power and control that evil spirits will exert over the nations of earth, it is more than likely that these four beasts who come out of the sea are also symbolic of the evil spirits who guide and control these physical, national leaders and the national entities that they represent.

**The First Three Beasts**

1. "The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I watched until its wings were torn off, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it" (v4).
2. "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear. and it raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth,: and they said this to it, Rise up and eat much flesh" (v5).
3. "After this I watched, and behold another, like a leopard, which had four wings like a bird on its back. For also the beast had four heads; and rulership was given to it" (v6).

Here, we see three beasts described as resembling animals; the first has its wings torn off and the third has four wings.
Who Are The Three Beasts?

It is easily proven that these three beasts are symbolic of specific nations or alliances of nations, but who are they?

The Lion

The lion is a regal animal that is pictured as the king of beasts. Having its wings torn off would seem to indicate that it has had its movement restricted from wherever the wings had once allowed it to go. The British Empire is a nation that has a standing lion as one of its national symbols and it is prophetically a nation of kings. It has attained great strength and control over the majority of all that it sought to conquer and has also lost much of its vast empire through the dismantling of its great war machine (navy and army). It has, in essence, had its wings torn off. Among all the nations of the world, the British empire most closely fits the description of the regal lion.

The Bear

The bear is an animal that roams over and controls a vast amount of territory. It is extremely powerful and kills and devours most anything that it desires. The nation that best fits the description of the bear is the nation of Russia, which has methodically and powerfully controlled vast territories by killing and taking what it has desired.

The Leopard

The leopard is a very powerful and lethal animal that strikes with lightning speed. The wings of this prophetic beast give it great mobility and speed, allowing it to quickly kill and devour its prey. These wings are likely symbolic of its air, army, naval, and marine forces. The only combination of nation-states that fits this description is the United States of America.

Although these three beasts are symbolic of three great empires on earth, it is likely that each animal is also symbolic of the nature of the evil spirit controlling each of these empires. See Dan.10:12-20; Rev.19:1-21.

The Fourth Beast

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold the fourth beast, fearful and terrifying, and very strong! And it had great iron teeth: it devoured and crushed, and stamped what was left with its feet: and it was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns" (v7).

Here, we see a beast unlike any of the other three. It is only described as being terrifying, very strong, having iron teeth with which to destroy and feet that trample anything that escapes its iron teeth. From this description, we can easily see that this empire is indeed powerful, destructive, and ruthless, and it shows no mercy to those it attacks.
Notice that this beast has ten horns. In biblical prophecy, horns are often symbolic of rulership, nations, and/or their national leaders (Dan.7:17, 23-24). It is important to keep this in mind, because understanding the symbolism of these horns is a key to understanding the Beast's alliance of nations and its physical/spirit leaders who are spoken of in the Book of Revelation.

**The Little Horn**

"And I was thinking about the horns, and, behold, another little horn came up among them, before whom three of the first horns were pulled up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things" (v8).

As Daniel is thinking about the ten horns (ten rulers of nations) upon the head of the fourth beast, three of these national rulers are torn out from among the ten. These three are removed from their positions of power and authority and replaced by the little horn (a national ruler) that does not appear as strong and powerful as the three that were removed. Although this individual appears to be weaker than the three he replaced, he is not, because he has eyes with which to see and a mouth with which to speak. The implication is that the other rulers are blind to the true purpose of the beast (the alliance of nations), but this individual is not; he sees and speaks, which means that he speaks for this beast and is, therefore, the one in authority over the beast. It seems that it is the little horn that controls and leads this alliance of nations. See Dan.8:8-9.

**The Ancient of Days**

"I looked until the thrones were set up and the Ancient of Days sat, whose robe was as white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool: his throne was like flames of fire; its wheels like burning fire [see Ezk.10:2-19]. A stream of fire went out and came out before him, a thousand thousands served him, and a myriad myriads stood before him: the court was set, and the books were opened" (vs.9-10).

Although verses 9 and 10 seem to have nothing to do with the subject at hand, they are very much a part of what is being described. Daniel just doesn't give the details of what he saw leading up to the things he recorded about the Ancient of Days. These two verses pertain to the time after Christ's return (Dan.2:44-45), the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, and what transpires during this time period concerning people's opportunity for salvation. See Rev.20:1-12.

**The Fourth Beast is Killed**

During the vision of the Ancient of Days and the events surrounding the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, Daniel sees the little horn that replaces the three horns (vs.7-8). He also sees the killing of the fourth beast at Christ's coming:
"Then I was looking because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke: I was looking until the beast was killed, and his body was destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time" (vs.11-12).

Verses 11 and 12 mention three distinct and different coming events concerning the fourth beast, the little horn, and the other three beasts.

In the first prophetic event, the fourth beast, which is the powerful alliance of ten nations, is destroyed by Christ when he comes to conquer the earth.

During the second prophesied event, the evil spirit (the son of perdition) who is the leader of the Beast alliance of nations is cast into the Lake of Fire to be tormented. The phrase, 'and his body was destroyed, and given to the burning flame' (vs.11-12) is speaking of the little horn who is the leader of the Beast and whose body is possessed of an evil spirit. See 2.Thes.2:3; Rev.17:8,11, 19:19-20.

In the third prophesied event, the other three evil spirits have their power and authority to rule taken away from them, but are allowed to continue to live for a time and a season (15 months) after which their existence will be terminated. The inference is that these other spirit-beings have their lives spared because God has some other task for them to perform at some future date.

Christ's Dominion

"I was looking in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heavens: and he came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And dominion was given to him, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, that shall not pass away, and his kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed" (vs.13-14).

Here, we see the same event spoken of in Daniel 2:35,44, which refers to the entire image being destroyed with the stone (Christ) and the subsequent establishment of the Kingdom of God the Father over all the earth.

What do These Things Mean?

"And I came near one who stood by and asked him the truth of all this. And he told me and made me to know the meaning of the things" (v16).

The Beasts and the Kings

"These great beasts are four, they are four kings; they shall rise up out of the earth" (v17).
The angel reveals the key that unlocks the mystery of these four beasts and the overall theme that occurs over and over again in prophecies concerning the end of the age, especially in the Books of Daniel and Revelation. These beasts are symbolic of four kings and one cannot be a king unless one has a kingdom; therefore, it follows that the kings must also represent nations or groups of nations just as the head, chest, belly, legs, and feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image represent four distinct empires. In these four beasts, there are also pictured at least four distinct and individual spirit-beings who control the four empires, which Christ will destroy at his coming. See Dan.10:11-20.

The great difference between Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image and Daniel's vision of the four beasts is that the image has both a symbolic historical fulfillment as well as an end of the age fulfillment; whereas, the four beasts only represent evil spirits, people, and events that surround the time of Christ's return as conquering King.

The Saints of God

"But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever" (v18).

Although these four kings and their empires are extremely powerful, they are no match for Jesus Christ who will destroy them and their empires at his coming. He will give the rule of the earth to the elect of God who are included in the first resurrection.

The Fourth Beast

"Then I wanted to know the truth of the fourth beast, which was different from all of them, very frightening, whose teeth were of iron, and its nails bronze; who devoured, and crushed, and trampled what was left with its feet. And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth speaking great things, and its look was greater than its fellow" (vs.19-20).

This fierce and powerful fourth Beast is an alliance of ten nations led by an evil spirit who is called the Beast and whose purpose is to bring all humanity under a one-world government for the purpose of worshiping and serving Satan the Devil.

War With the Saints

"I watched, and the same horn made war with the saints, and overcame them; until the Ancient of Days came, and judgement was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (vs.21-22).
One of the primary goals of the little horn (the leader of the beast) is to kill all of the saints (God's elect). In order to accomplish this goal, he uses his position of authority over the alliance of nations (the fourth beast) to persecute and kill them. Although he is allowed to murder many of God's chosen, he will not be completely successful in totally removing the elect of God as a threat to himself and the alliance of nations he rules. This is because the elect must proclaim God the Father's good news message before Christ comes to destroy the Beast's powerful alliance of nations, kill the beast leader's body, and cast him into the Lake of Fire.

The Devouring of the Earth

"This he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces" (v23).

The angel says that the fourth beast is the fourth kingdom and is different from anything that has ever come before it, and that it is an extremely powerful and fierce alliance of nations, which devours the whole earth.

The following questions about the Beast can only be answered after certain events surrounding this Beast occur:

- What makes this kingdom unique from all that have come before it?
- How will it devour and control the whole earth?

We can only speculate that whatever this unique thing is, it has something to do with the spirit world and/or things of God that he has held secret concerning his vast creation and how it interacts with humanity. However, what we do know for certain is that whatever makes this kingdom unique, it will only be thoroughly understood by the elect of God. See Dan.12:9-10; Rev.1:1-8; 17:8.

There are many prophecies that show the primary focus of the fourth beast is on the Israelitish nations and those allied with it. There are also prophecies concerning Asia that clearly show that the beast does not conquer them. Therefore, it is logical to assume that this reference to devouring the whole earth has to do with some type of control of the world's leaders through demonic possession and/or influence and/or control of the world’s economy and natural resources, rather than military conquest and control. Although the Beast may not totally militarily conquer the whole earth, the prophecies clearly show that this alliance of nations is so powerful that no other nation on earth has the military strength to challenge its authority. See Rev.13:7.

The Different Horn

"And the ten horns [rulers of nations] of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be different from the first, and he shall subdue three kings" (v24 KJV).
Out of this unholy alliance of nations will arise ten leaders who will assume authority over the beast for a short time before three of them are eliminated by one that is somehow uniquely different from the others and somehow manages to elevate himself to a position of authority over all the rest and becomes the supreme ruler of the ten-nation alliance.

**The Horn Hates God and His People**

"And he [the different horn] shall speak words against the Most High [see verse 11] and wear out [persecutes] the saints of the Most High:, and he intends to change times and the law: and they [the saints] shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time [3½ years]" (v25).

Once again, we are shown that the leader of the Beast alliance of nations hates the things of the true God and speaks out against him and his son, persecutes God's followers, and attempts to change God's holy observances and laws. This scripture also reveals that the persecution against the elect of God by the leader of the Beast will last three and a half years before Christ's return. See Rev.13:5-7.

**The Saints Will be Victorious**

"But the judgement shall sit, and they shall take away his rulership, to cut off, to destroy until the end. And the kingdom and rulership, and greatness of the kingdom under all the heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. And all kingdoms shall serve and obey him" (vs.26-27).

Although the alliance of nations called the Beast and its leader conquer and control much of the earth and its inhabitants, they will not be allowed to conquer all of humanity and kill all of God's elect. This is because the final outcome of all this war and carnage was decided ages ago by God the Father and Jesus Christ. In the end, the people of God will be victorious and gain control of the earth.

By B. L. Cocherrill and Charles E. Barrett
DANIEL'S SECOND VISION

What Daniel sees in this vision is similar to what he saw in his first vision. However, his second vision contains much more detail concerning the individual who becomes the supreme leader of the Beast alliance of nations, his persecution of the elect of God, his stopping of the daily sacrifices, and his desecration of the temple in Jerusalem:

Daniel 8:1-26 Paraphrased

"In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar, a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at first; and I saw in vision. And this happened to me when I was at Shushan the citadel which is in the province of Elam; and in the vision which I saw, I was by the canal Ulai" (vs.1-2)

"Then I lifted up my eyes, and looked, and, behold a ram was standing before the canal having two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher that the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing west-ward, north-ward, and south-ward; so that no beast could stand before him, nor were any who could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great" (vs.3-4).

In verse 22 of this chapter, we are told that this ram's two horns represent the kings of Media and Persia. Therefore, the only questions that remain are whether these two kings will rule together or in succession over a unified Media and Persia, or will they rule separately over each individual nation, and are these kings spirit or physical beings? Eventually, time will reveal the answers to these questions.

It is clear that, during the fulfillment of this prophecy, the kings of Media and Persia are in conflict with kings to the west, north, and south of their geographical area. It is also clear that these two kings are extremely powerful and go unchallenged until the arrival of the he-goat that comes out of the west.

"And I was considering, and, behold, a he-goat came from the west, over the face of all the earth, and did not touch the ground; and the he-goat had an outstanding horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram with two horns, which I had seen standing before the canal, and he ran to it in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close to the ram, and he was moved with great anger against him, and struck the ram and shattered his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him. And he threw him down to the ground, and trampled him: and no one could deliver the ram out of his hand" (vs.5-7).
There are two important things to note here:

1. Because this prophetic male goat is obviously not God's servant, it must somehow be associated with Satan's evil empire.

2. Something causes the goat who is the powerful ruler of Greece (Dan.8:21) to crush the kings of Media and Persia and impose his will upon these nations.

"Then the he-goat became very great: and when he was mighty the great horn was broken. And in its place came up four outstanding ones [four more horns] toward the four winds of the heavens. And out of one of them [the four horns] came a little horn, which became very great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the bountiful land [the holy land]" (vs.8-9).

Verses 8 and 9 show the same individual of Daniel 7:8, 24 (the little horn) who becomes the supreme leader of the Beast alliance of nations rising to power over an alliance of nations that exists within the Beast system (four of the ten).

There are ten national leaders of the fourth beast in Daniel's first vision who come out of the same geographical area of the world. However, this part of the second vision only concerns four of these leaders. After the ruler who is represented by the great horn on the he-goat is either deposed or dies, four lesser individuals take his place and rule, and out of them comes an even lesser individual who assumes dominance.

The Physical and Spiritual Realms

"And it [the little horn] became very great even to the host of heavens: and it made some fall of the host and of the stars [spirit-beings] to the ground and trampled them" (v10).

This little horn is the same individual that uprooted the three horns (other national rulers) noted in Daniel's first vision (Dan.7:8). The little horn is also the one who sets himself against the Sovereign of Heaven and Earth and persecutes his elect children. See Rev.13:5-7.

This is a reference to battles that will probably transpire in both the physical and the spiritual dimensions of time and space.

The Temple Desecrated

"Yet, he magnified himself even to the ruler [God] of the host, and the daily sacrifice was taken away by him, and the place of the sanctuary was cast down. And a host was given over to it along with the daily sacrifice because of transgression, and it threw the truth down to the ground; and it worked and prospered" (vs.11-12).

The little horn who is the supreme leader of the Beast alliance of nations is responsible for the daily sacrifices being stopped and the desecration of the temple in Jerusalem.
Verses 13-14 show that this desecration of the temple will last 1,150 days after which God will bring about events to cleanse the sanctuary of the pollution brought in by this unholy man.

"Then I heard a certain holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that one who spoke, Until when is the vision the regular sacrifice, and the desolating transgression, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled? And he said to me, For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings [1,150 days]; then the sanctuary will be vindicated" (vs.13-14).

The temple, was desecrated in 168 B.C. by Antiochus Epiphanes, but this prophecy foretells a future desecration of the temple and will be fulfilled sometime in the fourth year before the return of Christ as noted in Daniel, chapter 8, verses 15 to 19 and others scriptures.

An End of This Age Prophecy

"And it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision, then I sought the meaning, and behold, the form of a man stood before me. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, and he called, and said, Gabriel, make this one understand the vision. And he came beside my place: and when he came, I feared, and fell on my face: but he said to me, O son of man: understand for the vision is for the time of the end. And while he was speaking with me I was stunned and fell on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and made me stand. And he said behold I shall make you to know what shall happen in the latter end of the indignation: for it is for the time appointed for the end" (vs.15-19).

These are very clear statements that show this entire vision concerns the time period very near to Christ's return, just like Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image (Dan.2:28) and Daniel's vision of the four beasts (Dan.7:22).

The Meaning

"The ram which you saw with two horns is the kings of Media and Persia. And the shaggy goat is the king of Greece: and the great horn, that is between his eyes, is the first king. And as for that which was broken, four stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not with its power" (vs.20-22).

A review of historical and modern maps reveals that the modern counterparts of the ancient empires of Media and Persia are located to the north and east of the modern nation of Israel, and that ancient Greece is now modern Greece.
The Little Horn

Daniel, chapters eight, eleven, and twelve, speak of the emergence of the individual described as the "little horn" and the things he does to nations and people, including the Israelis (the Jews) and the elect of God who proclaim the coming Kingdom of God.

"And in the latter time of their kingdom [Greece, Media and Persia] when the transgressions have come to the full, a king of strong face, and skilled at intrigues, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power [spirit-power]: and he shall destroy marvelously, and he shall prosper, and work, and destroy the mighty and the holy people [the elect of God]. And also through his skill he shall make deceit succeed in his hand; and he will lift himself up in his heart, and be at ease: he shall destroy many: he shall also stand against the ruler of rulers [Jesus Christ]; but he shall be broken without hand" (vs.23-25).

This prophecy in Daniel is about the time when the earth will be full of lawlessness. These are as the days of Noah spoken of by Jesus Christ (Matt.24:37). During this time, a very crafty individual will rise to prominence and leadership and becomes the he-goat (ruler of Greece) and then the fourth beast (an alliance of ten rulers/nations). It is during his dominance of these other three rulers/nations that he becomes the supreme leader of the alliance of nations called the Fourth Beast in Daniel 7:7,18-23. This individual will destroy nations and people, persecute the elect of God, and then he will finally have his authority and power taken away in the events that lead to Jesus Christ's return.

SUMMARY

The ability to recognize the alliance of nations called the Beast is extremely important to those who live in the times just prior to Christ's return. It is equally important to recognize the leader of the Beast once he comes to power, because he is the one whom the world will worship and give homage to as if he were a god in the flesh. See chapter 16 for more details about the Beast's political/religious governmental system.

By B. L. Cocherell and Charles E. Barrett
THE SCRIPTURES OF TRUTH

The introduction to the prophecy of Daniel eleven is very important to the understanding of the prophecies concerning the end of the age because it reveals some of the interactions among spirit-beings themselves and between spirit-beings and the physical world. Therefore, before proceeding with this study, it is advisable to read the first eleven verses of Daniel chapter ten.

Daniel 10:12-14, 21 Paraphrased

"Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that you did set your heart to understand, and to chasten [fast] yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I am come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia held me back twenty one days: but, Michael, who is one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make you understand what shall befall your people in the latter days: for this vision is for far in the future" (vs.12-14).

This messenger from God was prevented from going to Daniel by another spirit-being who was the ruler of the kingdom of Persia. This means that, at that time in history, there was an evil spirit in control of the kingdom of Persia, and this spirit was at least as powerful as the messenger sent to Daniel. Notice also that the messenger was only able to continue his journey to see Daniel after Michael (a high ranking angel), came to intervene.

We are not told the details of what the messenger from God first reveals to Daniel. However, by Daniel's reaction to the things he heard and what he saw happening to the house of Judah (the Jews) in the end of the age, we can assume that it must have been extremely horrifying and depressing (see vs.14-15). Although what Daniel saw will happen to the Jews, by extension, the House of Israel will be affected because they have a major role in the things that happen to the Jews in the end of the age.

After giving Daniel this message, the angel returns to fight with the spirit-being in charge of Persia. In the following verses we see that both evil and good spirit-beings can exert control and/or influence over the physical rulers and nations in order to further God's plan for humanity:

"And he said, Do you know why I have come to you? And now I will return to fight with the ruler of Persia: and when I have gone, then the ruler of Greece shall come. But I will tell you what is written in the Scriptures of Truth: and no one makes himself strong with me in these things except Michael your ruler. And I in the first year of Darius the Mede, I was his supporter and a fortress for him" (vs.20-21, 11:1).
Here, we see that there seems to be an ongoing battle between evil and righteous spirit-beings as the righteous ones carry out God's instructions. Notice that this messenger from God was the spirit-power behind Darius and his kingdom, and that Michael was the angel who was responsible to God for the House of Judah.

This messenger from God tells Daniel what is written in the Scriptures of Truth. Because of the details of what this messenger reveals about these scriptures, it is likely that the Scriptures of Truth are written in a book in heaven which details God's plan for humanity.

It is important to understand that, although some of what the angel reveals to Daniel does seem to have already been fulfilled, the whole Book of Daniel is written from the perspective of revealing people, places, and events that surround the last few years before Christ's return to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Daniel 11:2-43 Paraphrased

"And now will I show you the truth [what is written]. Behold there will stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth will be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he will stir up all against the realm of Greece" (v2).

At the time Daniel received this message, the Babylonian empire (the head of gold) was gone, and Persia was in power. The angelic messenger shows Daniel that there will be three more kings to come from the Persian Empire, and then there will arise a fourth Persian king who will be conquered by a mighty king from Greece (Alexander the Great). But the kingdom of Greece would be divided into four sections.

"And a mighty king will stand up, that shall rule with great authority, and do according to his will. And when he will stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided to the four winds of the heavens; and not to his posterity, nor according to his authority with which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be pulled up, and given to others beside these" (vs.3-4).

From verses 5 to 35, the prophetic account seems to relate to the historical activities between two ancient empires: the Seleucid empire, with its headquarters usually in northern Syria, and the Ptolemaic empire located in Egypt. However, these two empires are clearly symbolic of nations that will exist in the end of the age as noted by the first few words in verse 6: "And in the end of years".

If in fact, the Seleucid Empire and Ptolemaic Empire are symbolic of modern day nations located to the north and south of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. What we see explained in verses 6 through 26 of Daniel eleven must pertain to the political situation within and around the nations that surround the Jewish nation of Israel.
Political Deception

In verses 27 through 31, the messenger begins to reveal the political deception and intrigue that will transpire between two prominent leaders of alliances of nations to the north and south of Israel just before the last three and a half years before Christ's return.

What is clear from these scriptures is that, long before the final invasion and destruction of the Jewish nation of Israel which will occur approximately three and a half years before Christ's return, two prominent world leaders will conceive a plot to destroy Israel. However, they will be prevented from carrying out their plans, because God will not allow the destruction of Israel until other prophetic events transpire:

"And both these kings in their hearts shall seek to do evil, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for the end comes at the appointed time. Then shall he return to his land with great wealth; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall act, and he will return to his own land. At the appointed time he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: And he shall be grieved, and turn back, and be furious against the holy covenant: And he shall act, and will return, and will heed those forsaking the holy covenant" (vs.27-30).

Notice that one of these national leaders has an intense hatred for the holy covenant. Understanding what this covenant is will make it easier to understand the prophetic events that surround the destruction of the Jewish nation of Israel. The English word holy in these verses is translated from the Hebrew word qadash, which connotes things that are sacred to God, and it can mean being set apart, holiness, and sacredness.

The things that cause the destruction of Israel and the captivity of the Jews before Christ's return are directly tied to the proclaiming of the gospel by God's people, the sacrificial system in Jerusalem, and the two witnesses. Therefore, the holy covenant that is hated can only refer to the Mount Sinai Covenant that God made with national Israel and the institution of the sacrificial system of worship that will be taking place at a new temple in Jerusalem. The worship of the true God through the sacrificial system in Jerusalem will be a major source of irritation to all nations, especially to the nations that surround Israel.

Notice also that, after a conflict involving the nations to the south of Israel that does not turn out well for the king of the north (the leader of the Beast alliance of nations), he finally takes the advice he has been given to eliminate Israel as a problem to other nations. Clearly, the people noted in verse 30 who forsake the holy covenant can only be Jews (the covenant people) who have been advising this national leader to either control or eliminate the Jewish nation of Israel and their worship system.
Two major things to watch for just before the destruction of the Jewish nation of Israel are the establishment of the sacrificial system in Jerusalem, officiated over by the Levitical priesthood, and much military activity and political instability in the Middle East caused by the events surrounding the Jew's practice of the religion of their ancestors.

The Temple Desecrated

"And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that makes desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries..." (vs.31-32).

Although Antiochus Epiphanes did desecrate the temple in Jerusalem by offering swine's blood on the holy altar, he in no way fulfilled the prophecy concerning the man of sin and son of perdition spoken of by Paul and Jesus (2.Thes.2:3-4; Rev.13:3-4). The son of perdition is to be the Antichrist/Beast. Antiochus cannot be this man, because he did not claim to be above all gods, nor was his fatal wound healed: he died in 168 B.C.. Moreover, no king to this day has desecrated a temple in Jerusalem and exalted himself above every god and prospered greatly; therefore, this prophecy is yet to be fulfilled.

The People of God

"But the people that know their God shall be strong, and will work. And those who understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help: but many shall cleave to them through hypocrisy" (vs.32-34).

Just before Christ's return, the elect of God who truly know God and have spiritual gifts will perform great wonders and miracles, and the truth of God will again be taught by those gifted with understanding. Some of these people who proclaim the Father's good news message will be murdered because of their zeal for him and his truth.

Notice also that many people will attach themselves to the elect by pretending that they want to follow the truth of God or some other flattering reasons. This shows that within the body of the elect, there will be people who are neither called nor converted, but attach themselves to the elect for reasons other than to obey God's truth. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, some of these people will be doing Satan's bidding (Satan's fifth column within the church 2.Pet.2:1-22; Jude 1:1-13). The parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt.13:24-30, 36-43) clearly shows that there are those who are plants of Satan. They cling to the elect with flatteries trying to divide and conquer. God encourages the elect not to be overly concerned about these tares, because he will deal with them at the time of Christ's return. The elect are to be totally focused upon their calling and doing their job.
"And some of them of understanding shall stumble, to refine and purge them, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for an appointed time" (v35).

The end of the age will be an extraordinarily difficult time in which to live. In the course of these events, some who truly understand the truth will make fatal or near fatal mistakes concerning their salvation. Some will fall prey to their own vanity, temptations of the flesh, and other things that will cause them to either forsake or compromise their calling. The failure of these who are gifted with understanding will not only bring major trials upon themselves but also in many cases, will bring a trial for those who know them. Although no trial is pleasant, if one has the right attitude and overcomes the trial, spiritual growth and eternal salvation will be the reward.

The Antichrist/Beast

"And the king [Antichrist/Beast] shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the fury [the wrath of God] is accomplished: for that which is decreed shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, or the desire of women, nor love any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his place he shall honor the god of forces [Satan]: and a god whom his fathers did not know with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and desirable things. And he shall act in the strong holds of the fortresses with a foreign god [Satan], he shall increase in glory: and he shall cause them [evil spirits] to rule over many, and shall divide the land for a price" (vs.36-39).

These are clear references to the individual who will be the Antichrist/Beast and is the leader of the alliance of nations known as the Beast. This individual has no regard for the true God or any other god, because he is more powerful than most of the false gods that humanity has worshiped throughout the centuries; however, he does pay homage to the god of this world—Satan the Devil—who is more powerful than he. See Rev.13:3-4.

"And at the time of the end, the king of the south [south of Israel] shall push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him [king of the south] like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land [the holy land/Israel], and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps" (vs.40-43).
In verses 40 through 43 above, the king of the north is not speaking of the leader of the nations just north of Israel, but of the Antichrist/Beast who is of the leader of the Beast alliance of nations.

In the end of the age, a political agreement will likely exist between Israel and her neighboring nations to the north and south. In this same time frame, the Jews will build the temple. This agreement will also guarantee access to Jerusalem by the surrounding nations. The Beast's ten-nation alliance is the guarantor of peace between these nations and Israel. Keeping the peace will be his excuse for intervening in the affairs of these nations; however, his true reasons are far more sinister.

"But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to take away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas [Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea, and the Mediterranean] in the glorious holy mountain [Zion]: yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him" (vs.44-45).

The Antichrist/Beast uses the political turmoil in the Middle East as an excuse to invade and conquer Israel. The Jews and others who heed the warning that is going to be preached to them have a chance to escape when they see armies surrounding Jerusalem and the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. Those who do not heed this warning will suffer horribly until Christ's return (Matt.24:14-16).

"And there shall be a time of distress, such as has not been from the existence of a nation until that time. . ." (Dan.12:1 Para.).

These will be the most frightening and horrifying times that will ever come upon humanity. Even though Daniel was given these prophecies, he did not understand them, because they were meant for another people and another time, and that time seems to be now.

By B. L. Cocherell and Charles E. Barrett
The central focus of the Book of Revelation is on the time just before the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings to establish his Father's kingdom on earth. In this book, there is much information that explains some of the major prophecies in the Book of Daniel that pertain to spirit-beings, people, nations, and world events which will surround the people of God as they proclaim the Father's good news message to humanity.

An Evil Alliance

Just before Christ's return, there will be an evil alliance of nations allied with a great and wealthy religion. These two entities will use their great power and wealth to control the earth and its inhabitants. Moreover, this powerful religious and political alliance will be controlled by evil spirits who are ruled by Satan the Devil.

The Great Red Dragon, the Sea Beast, the Earth Beast, and the Great Whore are the four primary entities that are described in the Book of Revelation as being a part of an evil alliance that is in opposition to God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the elect of God. The Book of Revelation also states that these four entities cause the wrath of God to be poured out upon the earth and its inhabitants.

These four entities are various aspects of Satan's physical and spirit empire that interact with physical people, nations, and evil spirit-beings in order for Satan to control and influence the nations of the earth.

There can be multiple meanings to the symbolism used in the Book of Revelation; therefore, a list of definitions is provided to help eliminate some of the confusion concerning these four entities and their relationship to each other:

The Red Dragon

- Satan and his empire of evil spirits

The Sea Beast

- Satan's empire of evil spirits superimposed on physical people and nations
- The alliance of nations called the Beast
- The Leader of the alliance of nations called the Beast
The Earth Beast

- Satan's empire of evil spirits superimposed on a Babylonian religious system
- The Babylonian religious system called the Woman and the Great Whore
- The leader of the Babylonian religious system called the False Prophet

The Great Whore

- Satan's empire of evil spirits superimposed on the Woman and the Great Whore
- The Babylonian religious system that rules kings and nations
- The Babylonian religious system that is the state religion of the alliance of nations called the Beast

THE DRAGON, BEAST, AND WHORE

As you review what is presented in this study, it is important to keep in mind that it is Satan the Devil (the red dragon) who controls all aspects of the evil alliance of nations and its wealthy and powerful religion. It is also important to realize that the leader of the Beast alliance of nations called the Beast and the leader of the Babylonian religious system called the False Prophet are both spirit-beings under the control of Satan masquerading in human forms.
A Spirit Empire

There are many scriptures in the Bible that prove Satan is the ruler of this present world (2.Cor.4:4) as well as the ruler of all evil spirits that are on earth (Rev.12:7-9). Below are two texts that give a small glimpse into his vast spirit empire:

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet" (Rev.16:13 KJV).

Notice that the dragon, the leader of the beast alliance of nations, and the leader of the state religion of the beast alliance of nations are all mentioned as separate, individual entities who have the power to send forth evil spirits to perform tasks for them.

At the return of Christ, the only three individuals that are mentioned as being cast into the Lake of Fire are Satan the Devil, the Beast, and the False Prophet:

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev.20:10 Para.).

The Bible clearly shows that all wicked humans will be destroyed in fire, which is the second death. No human is going to be tormented in the Lake of Fire forever (Rom.6:23; Rev.20:14-15); therefore, it is clear that the Devil's two servants, the Beast and the False Prophet, must be spirit-beings, because they are not destroyed by this fire, but are tormented by it.

Note:

Almost none of the Book of Revelation is written in chronological order, and the explanations of its many subjects and their symbolic meanings are scattered throughout the book; therefore, we must attempt to piece together as much of the information as possible into an order that makes it understandable.

THE GREAT RED DRAGON

"And another great sign was seen in heaven; and, behold, a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns! And on his heads were seven crowns. And his tail drew a third part of the stars of heaven, and he throws them to the earth. . ." (Rev.12:3-4 KJV).

John sees a great spirit-being coming out of heaven that looks like a red dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns. It is clear from biblical symbolism that this spirit-being has great authority and power as symbolized by the heads, horns, and crowns. This red dragon is so powerful that it is able to force millions of angelic beings that are under its control to the earth.

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War in Heaven

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought along with his angels, and did not prevail; neither was their place found in heaven anymore. And the great dragon was cast out—the old serpent being called the Devil and Satan, he who deceives the whole inhabitable world was cast out onto the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev.12:7-9 KJV).

At some point in time, there is war in the dimension of time and space known as heaven. During this war, the great red dragon who is Satan the Devil is cast out of heaven along with all the angels who are under his control.

Who is Satan the Devil?

In order to understand the true meaning of many prophecies the biblical record about the great evil religious and governmental system that will exist just before Christ returns, it is necessary to understand who Satan the Devil is and what kind of authority he has over the earth and its inhabitants.

In 2. Corinthians 4, verse 4, Satan is shown to be the god of this world and in Revelation 12, verse 9 he is called the great dragon and that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world.

Matthew 4:1-10, contains the account of Jesus going to the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil prior to beginning his formal ministry of proclaiming the good news message from God the Father. The Devil came to Jesus and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth and offered to give them all to him if he would bow down and worship him.

Because he was able to offer all the kingdoms of the earth to Jesus Christ as a gift, the great red dragon who is Satan the Devil must be in control of the earth and all its inhabitants (except God's elect children) at this present time. Satan is not only the present ruler of this world but also the ruler of a vast unseen empire of evil spirits (demons) who do his bidding.

The Symbolism of Revelation 12:3-4

The red dragon with 7 heads and 10 horns with crowns represents Satan and the leaders of various aspects of his empire, (Satan and his empire of evil spirits). More specifically, the seven heads represent seven powerful evil spirits who directly serve him.

The seven crowns either symbolize the authority of the seven heads or seven lesser evil spirits. The ten horns are ten lesser evil spirits who are in control of nations and/or other evil spirits.
The Devil's Anger

"Woe to the ones dwelling on the earth, and in the sea, because the Devil came down to you having great anger, knowing that he has but a little time..." (Rev.12:12 KJV).

If Satan and his fellow evil spirits already control the earth and its inhabitants, why is he so angry at being cast out of heaven? He is so angry because he no longer has access to God the Father's realm of existence, which means that he has only a short time before he will be punished for his rebellion against God. Because Satan is denied what he wants and is about to be punished for his disobedience, in a rage, he comes to earth to take out his anger on God's physical creation.

As we will show, it is Satan the Devil who will empower and control the religious and political alliance of nations prophetically called the Beast. He will also empower and control the leader of this alliance called the Beast and the leader of the Babylonian religious system who is called the False Prophet.

THE SEA BEAST

Revelation 13:1-18 Paraphrased

"And I stood on the sands of the sea. And saw a beast coming out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on its heads names of blasphemy. And the beast that I saw resembled a leopard, with feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion. And the dragon gave its power to it and its throne and great authority" (vs.1-2).

Notice that the beast who comes out of the sea (see Isa.57:20; Rev.17:15) is almost identical to the red dragon (Satan) who was cast out of heaven. We know that Satan already has authority and control over the earth and its inhabitants until he is deposed by Jesus Christ (Dan.2:44; Rev.11:15); therefore, it is logical to assume that the beast that will come out of the sea (people) is not Satan, but represents something else.

What the apostle John sees is a beast very similar to the one Daniel saw. The beast comes out of the sea (out from among the nations) and it is like a leopard, a bear, and a lion and it has ten horns (Dan.7:4-6).

The red dragon (Satan) gives this Sea Beast its power and authority. Moreover, the Sea Beast represents national leaders and the nations of people whom they rule, and these national leaders are themselves ruled, influenced, and controlled by evil spirits who directly serve Satan. This is Satan's spirit empire superimposed on the physical leaders and nations of this world.

The Symbolism

The Sea Beast represents Satan's empire of evil spirits superimposed on people, nations, and an alliance of nations called the Beast.
A Wounded Head

"And I saw one of its heads, as if it had been wounded to death; and its fatal wound was healed. . ." (Rev.13:3).

It is important to note that a distinction is made between each of the seven heads of the Beast. One of the seven called the Beast sustains a fatal wound. Although this head could represent a nation of people who are controlled by a powerful spirit-being, when we look at other scriptures pertaining to the leader of the alliance of nations who is also called the Beast, it seems that this head is actually a national leader.

"And the earth marveled at the beast. And worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast: saying, Who is like the beast; who is able to make war with it?" (Rev.13:3-4). See also Rev.13:1-2.

It is important to understand that some extraordinary events are going to happen surrounding the dynamic and charismatic leader of the Beast system and the way in which he comes to power. The circumstances surrounding the death and resurrection of this individual will be so incredible that when people see this event they will be astonished.

Because of these incredible events, people will believe the proclamation by the False Prophet that this individual is a god in the flesh. Therefore, they will worship the red dragon (Satan) and because people will worship Satan, we can assume that, when this person comes on the scene, there will already be a religious organization in existence through which to perform this worship.

Will people actually worship Satan? The answer is yes. According to the Bible, most people have been both knowingly and unknowingly worshiping Satan and other evil spirits since Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden, and people will continue to do so until God's plan for the salvation of humanity is finished.

The Mouth

"And a mouth speaking great things and blasphemes was given to it [the Beast's alliance of nations]; and authority to act forty-two months [3½ years] was given to it. And it [the Beast] opened its mouth in blasphemy toward God, and to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and those dwelling in heaven" (Rev.13:5-6).

This mouth represents the supreme leader of the alliance of nations called the Beast and is the same mouth spoken of in Daniel 7:8,11, 20, 25. He is the leader of the Fourth Beast (fourth empire) that Daniel was told would exist in the end of the age just before Christ's return.

War With the Saints

"And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them: and authority was given to it over every tribe, and tongue, and nation" (Rev.13:7).
This is also the same individual spoken of in Daniel 7:21,25 and 8:24 who will make war with the saints of God. It is important to understand that it is God who allows this evil alliance of nations led by this powerful evil spirit to persecute and kill his elect children in order for some of them to be spiritually purified. God also allows the persecution of his elect so that they can perform a witness for him.

"And all those dwelling in the earth will worship him, whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life who was slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev.13:8).

All the people on earth will give homage to this powerful alliance of nations and its leader, and as shown in verses 14 and 15, many will bow down and worship an image that represents the Beast system and its leader. Those whom God the Father has chosen to become a part of his Family and Kingdom at the first resurrection and the coming of Jesus Christ are specifically warned not to worship the Beast if they do not want to lose their salvation.

Now that we have identified the Sea Beast as an alliance of nations that is led by an evil spirit who is masquerading as a human, and that this alliance and its leader are under the control of the red dragon who is Satan the Devil, we can explore some of the details that concern the Sea Beast and what it does during the end of the age.

THE BEAST WHO WAS, AND IS NOT, AND YET IS

In Revelation 17:8 and 11, there is a reference to the beast who was, and is not, and yet is. These scriptures are confusing because there seems to be a different personality being spoken of in each one: one is the beast who goes into perdition and one is the beast who is the eighth of the seven (Rev.17:11). However, both scriptures refer to the same person.

The Beast Goes Into Perdition

"The beast that you saw, was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and go into perdition; and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, seeing the beast, that it was a thing, and is not and yet now is" (Rev.17:8 Para.).

There are a number of things that are important to take note of in verse 8 that will help to identify who and what it is that goes into perdition:

- It was and is not: Notice that this beast existed before John's vision and at the time of John's vision, it did not exist in the form of a religious and political form of government.
• Out of the abyss: The Sea Beast will come out of the abyss, which is the realm of evil spirits, and it will exist for a short time on its way to perdition. Although this beast comes out of the abyss (the realm of the spirit world), it also comes out of the sea (from among people, Rev.13:1;17:15). This is yet another proof that the individual who is the leader of the Beast alliance of nations is an evil spirit masquerading as a human being.

• It goes into perdition: The English word perdition is translated from the Greek word: apoleia, and in the context of verse 8, it refers to an everlasting state of torment that is reserved for certain evil spirits. Therefore, we can logically assume that the leader of the Beast alliance is a powerful evil spirit.

• It is a thing: When the angel describes the beast as a thing, he does so in order to show that this individual also represents a religious and political form of government that will have had seven successive resurrections to power by the time Christ comes to destroy it. Although the first statement "was, and is not" in verse 8 seems to contradict the last statement "is not, and yet now is", it is not a contradiction, because the angel is referring to a future time in which people will be in amazement over the great power and accomplishments of this religious and political alliance of nations called the Beast. According to Revelation 13:8, the only ones who will understand the truth about the meaning and intent of this Beast will be those whom God has personally chosen prior to the existence of the earth (i.e., the elect of God who will be proclaiming the soon coming Kingdom of God).

There can be little doubt that the Beast who was and is not and is about to rise out of the abyss is a powerful evil spirit who will lead and control a religious and political governmental system (the Beast) and is in fact, its supreme leader. However, keep in mind that this evil spirit is not Satan the Devil; it is another evil spirit who does his bidding. See Rev.16:13; 20:10.

Eighth of the Seven

"And the beast which was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven and goes into perdition" (Rev.17:11 Para.). See Dan.7:11-12; 2.Thes.2:3.

The Eighth Beast

Why is the Beast "which was, and is not" referred to as the eighth beast of the seven? If you start with ten, then depose three, there are only seven left. But who dominates the seven? The little horn noted by Daniel who eliminated his opposition and became the leader of the Beast alliance of nations dominates the seven; therefore, he is actually the eighth leader in a succession of leaders.
What is not said in this prophecy is that, when this leader (the Beast) assumes the responsibility as the supreme leader of the Beast alliance, he probably does not continue in his former leadership responsibility and someone else fills his former position and becomes the eighth of the seven leaders.

This eighth Beast (national leader) also goes into perdition like the Beast noted in Revelation 17:8. This is yet another proof that both references are speaking of the same individual.

In order to understand verse 11, one must understand that the beast that was, and is not is the same seven headed beast that Daniel spoke of (Dan.7:23,24) and it is the same one that the woman who is symbolic of a Babylonian religion rides (Rev.17:3).

The primary reason that verse 11 is confusing is that the angel is not speaking of all seven heads of the beast as a whole, he is only speaking about the seventh head that is the last religious and political system under the control of Satan. The angel is also explaining something about one of its ten horns, which are symbolic of the ten initial leaders of the alliance of nations that is collectively called the Beast. Therefore, in order to understand who the eighth beast of the seven is, we must first understand the symbolism of the ten horns on the seventh head.

Note:

Although the two verses that follow verse 11 seem to be connected to the Sea Beast, they are not. These two verses speak of another group of ten nations, civil rulers, and evil spirits that serve the beast alliance of nations. See chapter 17 entitled, The Ten Horns of the Prophetic Hour.

Also keep in mind, while analyzing the Beast and the horns, that these are evil spirits that are being spoken of, and that these events may take place in the spirit realm of existence and may or may not be reflected in people and events in the physical realm of existence.

The Seven Heads

"And I stood on the sands of the sea, and saw a beast coming out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on its heads names of blasphemy" (Rev.13:1 Para.).

"The seven heads are seven mountains [nations/empires] on which the woman [evil religious system] sits. And the kings are seven: five have fallen, and one is, and the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain a little"(Rev.17:9-10). See also Dan.7:7.

Because the heads seem to represent seven successive religious and political nations/empires under the control of Satan and the great whore, and only one of these symbolic heads will exist just before the return of Christ (Dan.7:19-22), it seems logical that the "beast which was, and is not" is the eighth and is of the seven, and is the one that will go into perdition. He must come out of the seventh and last great religious and
political alliance of nations under Satan's control. See Dan.7:11-12; 2.Thes.2:3.

The angel explains to Daniel what the beast and the goat are and that they will rise up and control the earth just before Christ's return:

"And the ten horns of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be different from the first, and he shall subdue three kings" (Dan.7:24 Para.).

"Then the he-goat became very great: and when he was mighty the great horn was broken; and in its place came up four outstanding ones [four more horns] toward the four winds of the heavens. And out of one of them [the four horns] came a little horn, which became very great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the bountiful land [the holy land]" (Dan.8:8-9 Para.).

Although four of these ten were somehow allied with each other, the one called the little horn eliminates his three associates from their positions of authority in the process of becoming dominant over the entire beast alliance of nations.

Conclusions

The Beast "who was, and is not" that goes into perdition and the eighth Beast of the seven who "was, and is not" that goes into perdition are the same evil spirit who is the leader of the Beast's religious and political alliance of nations. See Dan.8:8-9.

The angel also said that this national leader had a past existence: "he was." But if this national leader is human, how could he have existed in the past? Think back to King Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great image and recall that this symbolic image and the one who personified it would continue throughout the centuries and exist during the last days. Then the stone that was formed without hands would strike the feet of the image (its foundation) and destroy it. See Dan.2:27-34.

Because the individual mentioned in verses 8 and 11 had a past existence and is the leader of the last beast, he is probably not a human with the spirit of man; he is probably only in possession of a human life form. Moreover, he is the physical manifestation of a powerful spirit-being who has existed throughout the centuries as the leader of various nations/empires.

THE EARTH BEAST

"And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and it had two horns like a lamb, but spoke like a dragon. And it executes all the authority of the first beast before it, and it makes the earth and those dwelling in it to worship the first beast, that was healed of its deadly wound" (Rev.13:11-12 Para.).
There are a number of important things revealed in verses 11-12 concerning the relationship between the Sea Beast and the Earth Beast (the second beast):

- The Earth Beast comes from the earth.
- The Earth Beast has two horns like a lamb.
- The Earth Beast speaks as a dragon.
- The Earth Beast has the same authority as the Sea Beast.
- The Earth Beast has the authority to dictate religious ceremony and ritual.

In addition to these facts about the Earth Beast, chapter seventeen of the Book of Revelation shows a great religious system patterned after the Babylonian religious and governmental system; therefore, we can make the following three assumptions:

1. Lamb and sheep normally symbolize Christ and those who serve him; however, the Earth Beast speaks like a dragon (lies and blasphemes against the true God), has the same authority and power as the Sea Beast that is authorized and empowered by Satan, and forces people to worship the Beast (idolatry) who sustained the fatal wound. Therefore, we can assume that the Earth Beast represents the Babylonian religious system, which is in opposition to the true God.

2. Because the Earth Beast seems to represent a state religion that is patterned after the Babylonian system and has two horns, we can assume that the two lamb's horns either represent two combined religious systems and/or people or their leaders who are highly influenced or possessed by two evil spirits under Satan's control.

3. As with all Babylonian religious and governmental systems, both the civil and religious leaders share power and authority over all aspects of their subject's lives, and each of these leaders supports the aims and goals of the others. As we will see, this is the type of relationship that exists between the Sea Beast (an alliance of nations) and the Earth Beast (a Babylonian religion).

A Warning from Jesus and Paul

Jesus used the symbolism of sheep when he warned of false prophets who would masquerade as his servants in order to deceive the elect of God:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt.7:15-16 KJV). See also Jn.8:44; Rev.12:9.

The apostle Paul said to be aware of false apostles and deceitful workers who will preach a different Jesus and a different gospel from the one that brings true salvation. See 2.Cor.11:3-4; Gal.1:6-9.
2. Corinthians 11:3-4; 13-15 KJV

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled [deceived] Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes [and is] preaching another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit [an evil lying spirit], which you have not received, or another gospel, which you have not accepted. . ." (vs.3-4).

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (vs.13-15).

Supernatural Power

"And it does great signs and even makes fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth before men" (Rev.13:13 Para.).

Although verse 13 seems to be speaking of the supreme leader of the state religion of the Beast's alliance of nations who is the False Prophet, it is important to understand that this evil religious system and its leaders have tremendous supernatural power that they will use to deceive people and to counter the supernatural works that the elect of God will be doing as they proclaim God the Father's good news message of his coming kingdom and the return of his son, Jesus Christ.

"And it deceives those dwelling on the earth, because of the signs which were given to it before the beast . . ." (Rev.13:14 Para.).

It is important to understand that many unrighteous and righteous individuals have had the ability throughout the ages to wield supernatural power. However, this ability only indicates that a person has found a way to tap into supernatural power, is possessed by a spirit who is directing this power through them, or has been authorized by God or Satan to use this kind of power. The only way to tell if individuals are righteous or not is to look at the fruits of their life and their teachings in relation to the truth of God.

Idolatry

"Saying to those on the earth to make an image of the beast who has the wound of the sword and lived. And it was given to it to give a spirit to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast could speak, and might cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (Rev.13:14-15 Para.).
This False Prophet has an image made of the leader of the alliance of nations (the Beast), which he empowers with an evil spirit, so that it has the ability to speak. The False Prophet then forces people to worship the image or suffer death for disobedience. This forced worship is reminiscent of king Nebuchadnezzar's forced worship of the image he made.

Anyone who seriously studies the Bible should understand that the forced worship of this image constitutes idolatry, and upon seeing or hearing of this forced idolatry, they should understand that they are indeed living in the end of the age, and that this alliance of nations and its worship system is indeed the evil religious and political government of the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation.

**The Mark and/or Name**

"And the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the freemen and the slaves, allow it [the beast's state religion] to give them a mark on their right hand, or on their foreheads: so that none could buy or sell, except they have the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of the name of it. Here is wisdom. Let him having reason count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and its number is six hundred and sixty-six" (Rev.13:16-18 Para.).

The mark and/or name of the Beast is a sign of allegiance to this evil religious and political system of the Beast. It is obvious that there are many undesirable physical consequences for not accepting this mark. For those who worship the true God, the threat of physical consequences for not accepting the mark are minimal compared to the eternal consequences for accepting it.

**THE GREAT WHORE**

"And one of the seven angels who have the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying to me, Come, I will show you the judgement of the great whore that sits on many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants have become drunk through the wine of her fornication" (Rev.17:1-2 Para.).

The great whore and the mother of whores are both symbolic of the mother of all religions that are in opposition to the Sovereign God and his system of worship. This very ancient belief system combines both religion and government and has manifested itself in many different forms since Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden.

"And he [the angel] said to me, The waters which you saw, where the whore sits, are peoples, and crowds, and nations, and tongues" (Rev.17:15 Para.).
Notice that this great evil religious system is practiced throughout the world, mingles itself with the civil rulers of nations, and is a system that, because of its deception, causes those who practice it to lose touch with the reality of God's truth.

**The Woman Rides the Beast**

"And he carried me away into the desert by the spirit: and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, filled with names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns" (Rev.17:3 Para.).

The woman is symbolic of a rich and powerful religion and the Beast is the Red Dragon who is Satan the Devil. The inference is clear; the woman and the Beast are inseparable, one rides, the other carries—evil upon evil:

"And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and being gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand filled with abominations and unclean things of her fornication: And on her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, The mother of whores and of the abominations of the earth" (Rev.17:4-5 Para.).

Because whores and abominations are symbolic of evil worship systems, the angel is revealing that this religious system is the source from which all evil religions sprang—the mother of whores. He also reveals that this religious worship system is extremely powerful, influential, wealthy, and evil, and it exerts control over nations and national leaders throughout the world.

**Who is The Woman?**

"And I saw the woman was drunk from the blood of the saints, and from the blood of the witnesses of Jesus: and I marveled, seeing her with a great astonishment. And the angel said to me, Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast supporting her, the one having seven heads and ten horns" (Rev.17: 6-7 Para.).

The angel gives a number of keys that unlock the symbolism pictured by the mysterious woman and the Beast:

- The religious system symbolized by the woman has always persecuted and killed the elect of God and those who proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ. From the eleventh chapter of Revelation, we also know that the False Prophet will be instrumental during the last 3½ years before Christ returns in persecuting and murdering God's elect and the Two Witnesses.

- The woman is supported by the Beast, but she is not symbolic of the Beast. The woman and the Beast are two separate entities who are joined together for a common purpose.
• The Beast that supports the woman has seven heads and ten horns. This Beast is Satan personified and seven nations/empires and their leaders, which have come under his personal control.

The Woman and the Seven-Headed Beast

"The seven heads are seven mountains [nations/empires] on which the woman [evil religious system] sits. And the kings are seven: five have fallen, and one is, and the other has not yet come: and when he does come, he must remain a little while" (Rev.17:9-10 Para.).

When we realize that the seven heads are symbolic of seven successive religious and political nations/empires that have been controlled by Satan and the Great Whore, which will exist just before Christ returns, it becomes clear that verses 9 and 10 pertain to the coming of the seventh religious and political system.

"The woman you saw is the great city, that rules over the kings of the earth" (Rev.17:18 Para.).

It is interesting to note that the only city in today's world that rules over kings of nations is Vatican City, which is within the city of Rome and sits on seven hills (Rev.17:9).

The Great Whore is Destroyed

"And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the whore, and will make her desolate and naked, and they will eat her flesh, and will burn her down with fire. For God gives it into their hearts to do his mind, and to act in one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman who you saw is the great city, having a kingdom which rules over the kings of the earth" (Rev.17:16-18 Para.). See Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51.

Very near the time of Christ's return and perhaps during the last two plagues that Christ pours out on the Beast alliance of nations and the world, the alliance of Middle Eastern nations of Psalm 83 that are to the north and south of Israel will be motivated by God to destroy the capital city of the Beast's Babylonian religious system.

Although the scriptures do not say why these ten nations hate the Great Whore, what takes place is probably just one more powerful evil religious system destroying another powerful evil religious system with which it has major unreconcilable theological differences concerning who and what to worship.
Revelation 18:1-23 Paraphrased

"And after these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was illuminated by his great glory. And he spoke in a strong great voice, saying, Babylon the great has fallen! It has fallen and it has become a dwelling place of demons, and a prison for every unclean spirit, and every unclean bird, even having been hated; because of the wine of the anger of her fornication which all nations have drunk, even the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth became rich from the power of her luxury" (vs.1-3).

This is the point at which the great religion that will have attached itself to the Beast's alliance of nations is destroyed by the ten Middle Eastern nations that have allied themselves with the Beast for one prophetic hour.

A Serious Warning

"And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, My people, come out of her, that you may not share in her sins, and that you may not receive of her plagues. Because her sins are joined together, even up to heaven, and God remembered her unjust deeds" (vs.4-5).

Although verse 4-5 are likely directed to the houses of Israel and Judah, after the first return of Christ to gather the elect of God, this is an extremely serious warning from Jesus Christ to come out of the evil religions of this world and remain separate from the things of this world that can pollute one spiritually. The plagues that God will pour out upon this evil religious system and the people who are associated with it will be terrifying and fatal; therefore, it would be wise to heed this serious warning.

Spiritual Adultery

The prophets continually warned Israel about spiritual adultery, which the apostles also did when they warned the elect of God to be aware of the ministers of Satan who would attempt to deceive them into worshiping false gods:

"When the Lord your God shall cut off the nations from before you, where you go to possess them, and you succeed them, and dwell in their land; Take heed to yourself that you be not snared by following them, after they are destroyed from before you; and that you enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise. You shall not do so to the Lord your God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hates, have they done to their gods." (Deut.12:29-31). See Ezk.8:16; Jer.10:1-5.

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The apostle Paul warns the Father's elect at Corinth not to become entangled or participate in Satan's religions:

"Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" (2.Cor.6:14-16 Para.).

Be Separate From Satanic Religions:

The apostle Paul exhorts the Father's elect at Corinth to avoid mixing truth with paganism, and he told them to separate themselves from the religions of that day:

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2.Cor.6:17 KJV).

The Father's elect are not to participate in or be a part of this world's religions, because such participation constitutes spiritual adultery. The elect are the ambassadors of the Kingdom of God to this world (2.Cor.5:20). Anyone who is called to worship the true God and is associating with or dabbling in the religions of this world, would do well to heed the following extremely serious warning from Jesus Christ and remove themselves far from these evil practices:

"Give back to her as she also gave back to you, and double to her double, according to her works: in the cup which she mixed, mix to her double. By what things she glorified herself, and luxuriated, by so much give back to her torment and mourning. Because she says in her heart, I sit as a queen, and I am not a widow; and I do not see mourning at all. Because of all this, in one day her plagues shall come, death, mourning, and famine; and she shall be consumed with fire: for the Lord God judging her is strong" (Rev.18:6-8).

Christ says that the Babylonian system of religion that will be aligned with the Beast is extremely evil and that those who lead it are worthy of all the horrible and terrifying punishment that they will receive. The leaders of this great religious system are arrogant and self-important, believing that they are above the laws of God; therefore, Jesus Christ will totally destroy this evil system from off the face of the earth.

Destroyed in One Hour

"And the kings of the earth will weep for her, and will wail over her, those having fornicated and shared her luxury, when they see the smoke of her burning. Standing from afar, because of the fear of her torment, saying, Woe! Woe to the great city Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgement came" (Rev.18:9-10).

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"And they [those who mourn over her] threw dust on their heads, and cried out weeping and mourning, saying, Woe! Woe to the great city by which all those having ships in the sea were rich, from her coast lines, because in one hour she is ruined" (Rev.18:19).

This great and powerful religion that has its capital in a city close to the sea will meet its fate in a very short time, perhaps in only 15 days (one prophetic hour).

"And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her: because no one buys their cargo any more: Cargo of gold and silver, and of precious stone, and of pearls, and of fine linen, and of purple, and of silk, and of scarlet, and of thyme wood, and every ivory vessel, and every vessel of precious wood, and of bronze, and of iron, and of marble, And cinnamon, and incenses, and of ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine meal, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and the bodies and souls of men" (Rev.18:11-13).

The merchants of the world will weep and mourn, because this great religion will be the lifeline of all commerce through its association with the Beast alliance of nations and it will apparently control the movement of goods through the positions held by its worshipers in the Beast system. Notice that this evil system will also traffic in the lives (a reference to slavery) and corpses (bodies) of people as a commodity.

"And the ripe fruit of the lusts of your soul went away from you, and all the fat things, and the bright things went away from you, and you will find them no more, not at all. The merchants of these things, the ones being enriched from her, will stand from afar because of her fear and her torment, weeping and mourning. And saying, Woe! Woe to the great city, having been clothed with linen, and purple, and scarlet, and having been gilded with gold, and precious stone, and pearls! For in one hour such great wealth was desolated. And every ship-pilot, and all company on the ships, and the sailors, and as many as work the sea, stood from afar, And cried out, seeing the smoke of her burning, saying What is like this great city!" (Rev.18:14-18).

"And one strong angel lifted a stone like a great millstone, and threw it into the sea, saying, This way on an impulse, Babylon the great city will be throne down, and it will never more be found. And the sound of harpers, and of musicians, and the flutists, and of trumpeters, will never more be heard in you; and every craftsman of every craft will never more be found in you; and the sound of the mill will never more be heard in you; And the light of the lamp will never more shine in you; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will never more be heard in you" (Rev.18:21-23).

From this scripture and others, it is clear that the capital of this great religion will be completely destroyed and will never again be rebuilt.
The Elect of God Rejoice

When this great satanic religion and its capital city are destroyed, the elect of God will rejoice because one of the basic causes of all of humanity's problems will be removed. Now God the Father's righteous religious system will be established in Jerusalem as the only religion on earth and his plan for the salvation of humanity will go forward unimpeded by Satan's evil religions and those who lead them:

"Rejoice over her, heaven, and the holy apostles and the prophets; since God judged your judgments on her" (Rev.18:20). See also verse 24 (ibid).

SUMMARY

These chapters of Revelation show the relationship between the alliance of nations called the Beast, the leader of this alliance called the Antichrist and the Beast, the Babylonian religious system called the Great Whore that is led by the False Prophet, and the elect of God who will proclaim God the Father's good news message in opposition to Satan's religious and governmental system.

By B. L. Cocherell and Charles E. Barrett
The mysterious 70-week prophecy recorded by the prophet Daniel has baffled Bible scholars and theologians for centuries. Many have attempted to identify the beginning and ending dates of this prophecy using a continuous time-line from past benchmark dates. However, the problem with this is that the time allotted for the fulfillment of the 70-week prophecy has already passed and the prophecy has still not been fulfilled. This means that either the prophecy is false or the methods of calculation have been invalid.

Is it even possible to understand Daniel's 70-week prophecy? In order to understand this prophecy one must use the correct starting point and understand that this prophecy does not have a continuous time-line; it contains two major events separated by a vast amount of time.

The 70-week prophecy begins with a decree to allow the Jews who were first captives of the Babylonian empire and then the Persian empire to return to Palestine in order to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. The issuance of this decree sets irreversible prophetic events into motion. The issuance of this decree fixed the year for the Messiah's death and resurrection and revealed the sequence of events and the dates for the Messiah's return, which will bring an end to human rule on earth and usher in the government of God that will rule over the entire earth.

Daniel's Vision

While the prophet Daniel was praying and confessing his and Israel's sins to God, the angel Gabriel appeared to him in a vision around the time of the evening sacrifice:

"And he [Gabriel] enlightened me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I have come forth to give you skill in understanding. At the beginning of your supplications the word came, and I have come to reveal. For you are greatly beloved; therefore, understand the matter, and pay attention to the vision. Seventy weeks are decreed on your people and on your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy" (Dan.9:22-24 Para.).

Verse 24 shows that the people of national Israel (i.e., the House of Israel and the House of Judah) and the city of Jerusalem are the focal point of this prophecy. See Dan.9:20-21.
Verse 24 also shows that this prophecy spans 70 prophetic weeks. Because the prophecy did not come to pass 70 calendar weeks after the decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland was issued, we know that the 70 weeks are composed of prophetic years (Num.14:34; Ezk.4:6).

According to Daniel 9, verse 24, the following six major things must be accomplished during the 70-week prophecy:

1. Finish the transgression.

   The English word finish is translated from the Hebrew word kala, which means to restrict, hold back, or prohibit. When transgressions are restricted or held back (kala), they do not exist.

2. Make an end of sins.

   Sin is the violation of God's law. If there is no sin, there cannot be a violation. Therefore, whatever will happen during this prophecy has the ability to put an end to the violation of God's law.

3. Make reconciliation for iniquity (i.e., lawlessness).

   The English word reconciliation is translated from the Hebrew word kaphar, which has a purely theological meaning. It refers to the process by which physical defilement (impurity) and spiritual and moral sin is covered or set aside. When kaphar is accomplished, the breach between man and God is healed.


   Everlasting righteousness cannot exist where a violation of God's law exists; because, to be totally righteous is to be God-like in every aspect of one's being. Whatever happens during this prophecy makes it possible for one to remain perpetually righteous.

5. Seal up the vision and prophecy:

   The English word seal is translated from the Hebrew word chatham, which means to bring to an end. Therefore, if the vision and prophecy are brought to an end, everything within Daniel's vision and within the prophecy that was revealed to him will culminate in the final event of the prophecy, which is the anointing of the Most Holy.

6. Anoint the Most Holy:

   The English word anoint is translated from the Hebrew word mashiyach, which means to set aside or consecrate for a holy purpose. The English phrase Most Holy is translated from the Hebrew phrase godesh goddashim, which means the holy of holies (i.e., the innermost chamber of both the Tabernacle and the Temple of God). Therefore, we can assume that the conclusion of this prophecy is the establishment of a holy of holies where God's spirit-presence will dwell.
The 70-week prophecy spans thousands of years and includes an event that takes away sin through a new method of atonement which provides for the total forgiveness of sin and thereby completely heals the breach between God and mankind. This prophecy also culminates in the establishment of God's government on earth and the restoration of his sacrificial and temple system of worship at Jerusalem:

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan.9:25-27 KJV).

There are 2 major events described in this prophecy that must occur before its final fulfillment. The first event is the death and resurrection of the Messiah, which occurred in 30 A.D.. The second event involves a 7 year covenant that will be made and broken prior to the Messiah's return to conquer the earth to establish God's government over all nations forever.

WHAT YEAR DID CHRIST DIE?

According to various studies into the historical and astronomical data relating to the year of Jesus' crucifixion, the dates most often cited as the year of his death range from 27 A.D. to 33 A.D.. But, which of these years is the correct one?

This study shows that the year of Jesus' death can be found by using biblical, historical, and astronomical data. The following are several biblical, historical, and astronomical proofs that show Jesus' death to have occurred in 30 A.D..

PAUL AND HEROD AGrippa

Paul mentions that Barnabas and Titus went with him to Jerusalem 14 years after his conversion (Gal.2:1). This could only be the trip that he took to Jerusalem with food supplies and money that is mentioned in Acts 11:30.

While Paul, Barnabas, and Titus were at Jerusalem, King Herod Agrippa died. His death is well documented to have occurred in 44 A.D.. If we subtract 14 years from 44 A.D., it brings us to 30 A.D., which is the year of Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1-22), as well as the year of Jesus' death.
Agrippa who was a friend of Caligula, the Emperor of Rome, was made king of the Tetrarchy of his uncle Philip Techoritis and the Tetrarchy of Lysanias (Abla) a few days after Caligula's ascension to power in March of 37 A.D.. Agrippa went to his lands in 39 A.D., but almost immediately returned to Rome to bring accusations against his uncle Antipas to Caligula in 39 A.D.

Upon the assassination of Caligula on January 24, 41 A.D., Agrippa encouraged Claudius to accept the rulership of the Empire. Very early in his reign, in February or March, Claudius confirmed to Agrippa all the gifts of land Caligula had made to him and added to them the rest of the kingdom of Herod the Great.

Josephus says that, after having reigned for 3 years (41-44 A.D.), Agrippa died (Antiquities XIX 8.2). Agrippa's death is also described in Acts 12:21-23:

"On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, 'This is the voice of a god, not of a man.' Immediately because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten of worms and died" (NIV).

Notice that, at this time, Paul and Barnabas were in Jerusalem:

"When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark" (Acts 12:25 NIV).

30 A.D.

Paul's trip to Jerusalem, which is noted in Acts 12:21-25 is the same one mentioned in Galatians 1:22-24:

"I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: the man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. And they praised God because of me. Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus also along" (NIV).

This trip to Jerusalem took place 14 years after Paul's conversion, which was the same year of Jesus' death (Acts 9:1-22). Paul's first trip to Jerusalem was three years after his conversion (Gal.1:18; Acts 9:23-30). This information clearly points out that Paul's second trip to Jerusalem after his conversion occurred in 44 A.D.. Therefore the year of Paul's conversion and Jesus' death was 30 A.D.
The Fifteenth Year of Tiberius

"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the Tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of the Lord came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Lk.3:1-3 KJV).

Augustus (Gaius Julius Octavianus)
- Born on September 23, 63 B.C.
- Nephew of Julius Caesar
- (Julius Caesar assassinated March 15, 44 B.C.)
- Made Emperor (essentially) on January 13, 27 B.C.

Tiberius (Tiberius Claudius Nero)
- Born on November 16, 42 B.C.
- Adopted by Augustus and named Tiberius Julius Caesar
- On becoming Emperor, he was named Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus
- Began co-regency over certain eastern provinces in 12 A.D. (Suetonius Tib. vita, 21 A.U.C.765)
- Became Emperor upon Augustus' death August 19, 14 A.D.
- Confirmed as Emperor by Senate on September 17, 14 A.D.
- Died March 16, 37 A.D.


Tiberius began to reign officially as co-regent in 12 A.D. and as Emperor in 14 A.D.. If Luke's reference to the 15th year of Tiberius' reign is calculated from 12 and 14 A.D., the years would be 27 and 29 respectively. When the 3½ years of Jesus' ministry is added, the years are 30 A.D. and 32 A.D. respectively. Again, we find that 30 A.D. is a consistent date with other sources as the year of Jesus' death.
Detailed astronomical calculations have been made by many scholars, historians, and mathematicians to ascertain the exact year of Jesus' death. Although those who have made these calculations were probably intelligent and used the current data of their day, few of them agree on the date of Jesus' death.

Their methods of calculation involved the following information:

- Obscure and sometimes unreliable historical dates
- Unreliable interpretations about how the Calendar Courts arrived at their decisions
- Incorrect starting points

The majority of people who research the date of Jesus' death agree that the year could be no earlier than 28 A.D. and no later than 33 A.D. Moreover, there are few years within this time period that would allow for a Passover to occur on a Friday or a Saturday.

In order to harmonize with the apostle John's account, only 30 and 33 A.D. are promising dates for the crucifixion. A number of Bible scholars calculate that the crucifixion was Friday, April 7th, 30 A.D.

THE MIDST OF THE WEEK PROPHECY

Many who believe Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday give "the midst of the week prophecy" recorded in Daniel 9:24-27 as proof for their belief. There is no doubt that the Messiah is mentioned in this prophecy. But, does the prophecy foretell that the Messiah will be killed in the middle of a week?

Because of the complexity of this prophecy it is important to carefully note what each verse says and what it does not say. It is also important to separate the events from each other in order to calculate the years appointed for each event and its individual fulfillment. If this separation is not made, this prophecy cannot be understood.
Note:

We will use the King James Version (KJV), the Living Bible Paraphrased (LBP), the Jerusalem Bible (JB), and literal translations for clarity.

**Daniel 9:24**

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

The Living Bible Paraphrased more clearly explains the meaning using the prophetic ‘day for a year’ calculation (Ezk.4:6;Num.14:33-34).

"The Lord commanded that 490 years of further punishment upon Jerusalem and your people. Then at last they will learn to stay away from sin and their guilt will be cleansed; then the kingdom of everlasting righteousness will begin, and the Most Holy Place (in the Temple) will be rededicated, as the prophets have declared” (Dan.9:24 LBP).

Note:

The English phrase *most holy* in both the KJV and LBP are translated from the Hebrew phrase *qodesh qoddashim*, which means the holy of holies (i.e., the innermost chamber of both the Tabernacle and the Temple of God).

Clearly, verse 24 is telling us that, sometime after the 490 years of national punishment of Israel and Judah, the following events would take place:

- The new covenant will be instituted with regathered Israel and Judah.
- The Kingdom of God (i.e., everlasting righteousness) will be established and rule the earth.
- People will learn to live sinless lives.
- The Temple services will again be established as prophesied.

The Kingdom of God will be established after the 70 prophetic weeks are completed. However, it is also clear when we review Daniel 9, verse 26 that there is a vast amount of time between the end of the years of punishment and the establishment of the New Covenant and the Kingdom of God.
Daniel 9:25

"Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem to the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks: the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times" (v25 KJV).

"Now listen! It will be 49 years plus 434 years from the time the commandment is given to rebuild Jerusalem, until the Anointed One comes! Jerusalem's streets and walls will be rebuilt despite the perilous times" (v25 LBP).

This shows that there will be $7 + 62$ weeks or 69 prophetic weeks or $69 \times 7 = 483$ years until the Messiah comes.

The beginning date of the seventy weeks is fixed in verse 25: "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem and its walls." The only place in the scriptures where such a command is recorded is in Nehemiah 2:1-20.

"And it came to pass in the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king. . ." (Nehe.2:1 KJV).

Historical records show this date to be 445 B.C.. However, there is a reference to another attempt to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls found in the Book of Ezra (please read the first four chapters of Ezra, especially chapter 4, verses 7-23).

Note:

Another very important clue is the mention of the month of Nisan. This indicates that the years are to be counted as sacred years, which begin with the month of Nisan.

When Nehemiah heard of the condition of Jerusalem and its gates, he was very disturbed (Nehe.1:1-11). There is little doubt that the thing that disturbed him was the halting of the work at Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the Temple. This attempt to rebuild took place during the reign of King Artaxerxes.

Although it is not stated by Ezra, it is a foregone conclusion that any rebuilding of Jerusalem would have had the authorization of the king (Nehe.2:8). In the letter that the king gave Ezra, there was an all-purpose clause (Ezr.7:11-26). Verse 18 says, "Do whatever you want with the rest of your money." Although the king had only provided the money for the rebuilding of the temple, this clause left the builders free to also rebuild the gates and the walls of the city, which they did until some individuals brought it to the attention of the king. Because the king had only intended the money to be spent on temple restoration, he stopped the rebuilding of the gates and walls (Ezr.4:20-24).
If we use the solid historical evidence dating the reigns of king Herod Agrippa I and Tiberius Caesar with the biblical events as a benchmark (30 A.D.) to calculate the going forth of a decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, the only possible date would be nine years before the authorization that Nehemiah received in 445 B.C.. According to our calculations and documented historical dates, 454 B.C. is the only date that fits the biblical and historical record.

THE MESSIAH TO BE KILLED

Daniel 9:26

"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself: and the people of the Prince shall come and destroy the city and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and to the end of the war desolations are determined" (KJV).

"After this period of 434 years, the Anointed One will be killed, his kingdom still unrealized . . . and a king will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the temple. They will overwhelm as with a flood, and war and its miseries are decreed from that time to the very end" (LBP).

"And after the sixty two weeks, The Messiah will be cut off, and He'll have nothing/no one [lit. there is not to him]; And the city and the holy place the people of the coming ruler will cause to be ruin, And his end will be in a flood, And until the end of the war, desolations are decreed" (literal translation).

Verse 26 records two different prophetic events: One is about the Messiah and the other is about an evil ruler at the end of the age.

The First Event

The first part of this verse says that the Messiah would be killed 434 years after the going forth of the commandment. But how can this be? How can he be killed before his coming? The simple answer is that he could not. The 434 years must be after the 49 years, which makes a total of 483 years. Also notice that the Messiah is killed, but his kingdom is not established.

This first event does indeed foretell the exact time of the Messiah's death. Nehemiah gives the first month of the sacred calendar as the starting point of the 70 prophetic weeks. This is important to note because Nisan is the month in which the Passover lamb is to be killed. Jesus was killed on the Passover in 30 A.D., which was exactly 483 sacred years after the going forth of the command to build the walls at Jerusalem (Nisan, 454 B. C.; Ezr.4:7-23).
THE MISSING PROPHETIC WEEK

So far, we have only accounted for 483 years (69 weeks) instead of the 490 years (70 weeks) as stated in verse 24. This leaves 7 years (one prophetic week) unaccounted for at the time of Jesus' death. If we are to reconcile all 70 weeks of this prophecy, we must find the missing prophetic week. A search of the scriptures shows that the 7 remaining years are to be found over twenty-four centuries from 454 B.C., at the end of this present age just before the return of the Messiah.

Data:

- 454 B.C.: Ezra was authorized to begin rebuilding, but the rebuilding was stopped. In 445 B.C., Nehemiah was authorized to continue rebuilding.
- 483 years is equivalent to the 69 prophetic weeks of Daniel 9:24-27.
- There is no year 0 between B.C. and A.D., so we must add a year.
- 30 A.D. The month of Nisan. The month of the Passover.

\[
\begin{align*}
454 \text{ B.C.} & -483 \text{ years} \\
& = 29 \text{ A.D.} \\
& + 1 \text{ year} \\
& = 30 \text{ A.D.}
\end{align*}
\]

Notice that 69 prophetic weeks end in the year 30 A.D.. If the full 70 prophetic weeks (i.e., 490 years) were to be calculated from Nehemiah's authorization, the date would be 37 A.D.—a date that is impossible to reconcile with other historical facts that are known about the time surrounding Jesus' death. Therefore, this 1 prophetic week was to be fulfilled some time after the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

THE SECOND EVENT

The second event shows that an evil ruler will arise and destroy Jerusalem and the Temple. We know that the Romans destroyed the city and the temple in 70 A.D.. Moreover, we know that the end of human rule on earth did not cease in 70 A.D.. Therefore, this event has yet to be fulfilled. See also Matt.24:6-15.

Daniel 9:27

"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (KJV).
THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM AND THE TREATY

Many people believe that the Ruler in verses 26 and 27 is the Messiah. However, this would be impossible for the following reasons:

1. Jesus did not destroy the city or the temple or cause the sacrificial system to cease at his death. In fact, the sacrificial system did not cease until 70 A.D. Some might say the sacrificial system ended for the followers of Jesus because he was the perfect sacrifice. It is true that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice, but the Bible shows that the elect continued to observe many aspects of the Temple service after Jesus' death.

2. The treaty spoken of in verse 27 is before the return of Jesus.

3. After this evil ruler (antichrist) makes peace between the Jews and their Islamic neighbors, the Jews will build a Temple and institute the sacrificial system of worship. But, verse 27 shows that the sacrifices will be stopped by the antichrist:

   "And in the midst of the week [middle of the 7 years i.e., the prophetic week] he [the antichrist] shall cause the sacrifices and oblation to cease" (Dan 9:27).

4. This evil ruler will set himself up as God in the temple of God which is stated in Daniel 8:23-25 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11.

   "So great will he fancy himself to be that he will even take on the prince of princes [Christ] in battle [Armageddon] but in so doing he will seal his own doom. For he shall be broken by the hand of God, though no human means could overpower him" (Dan.8:23-25 Jerusalem Bible).

The final prophetic week contains the following events:

- There is a seven year period in which an agreement will be in force between the evil ruler (antichrist) and his allies.
- After 3 ½ years, this evil ruler (antichrist) will stop the sacrificial system and defile the Temple of God.
- The antichrist will destroy Jerusalem and the Temple, which is stated in verse 26: "And the people of the prince (antichrist) that shall come shall destroy the city and sanctuary and to the end of the war desolations are determined."

During this last 7 years of the 70 week prophecy, there will be a 3½ year period of great trouble that ends just before the return of the Messiah to establish his Father's kingdom and rule the inhabitants of the earth forever.
The fulfillment of prophecy is a major proof that the Sovereign God exists and that he has the power and authority to control the destiny of humanity. Moreover, the fulfillment of prophecy tells us that God's plan for humanity is right on schedule and we are very close to the fulfillment of the second half of the 70-week prophecy.

### Source Material

For those who want to study this subject further, there are many books available. Listed below are a few that we recommend:

_Astronomical Evidence for the Date of the Crucifixion_ by Fotheringham in J.T.S., vol. xii, Oct. p. 120-127.

_The Astronomy of Maimonides_ by Hebrew Union College Annual for 1949, vol. XXII, dissertation by Dr. Neugebauer.


_Studies In Hebrew Astronomy And Mathematics_ by Solomon Gandz.


By B.L. Cocherell

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CHAPTER
SIXTEEN

One of the major events to occur just before the return of Christ as Conquering King is the appearance of an individual called the Antichrist. Most people who have studied the personality and deeds of this individual have totally misunderstood the essential factors associated with this person.

Many view the Antichrist, the image, the mark of the Beast, and the Beast's alliance of nations as things that will be easily recognized as evil and sinister. The reality is that the Antichrist and his religious system of government will look like the greatest and most wonderful religious, political, and economic system the world has ever seen. The leader of this alliance of nations will appear as a dynamic and charismatic individual who will lead his alliance of nations and the world into a time of unparalleled peace and prosperity.

A Great Deception

Jesus said that the deception surrounding the Antichrist will be so clever that only the elect of God will recognize him and understand his true intent and purpose:

"And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, seeing the beast, that it was a thing, and is not and yet now is" (Rev.17:8 Para.). See also Dan.12:9-10; Rev.1:1-8.

All others on earth will be deceived into thinking that this person is indeed a savior of humanity. Therefore, it is extremely important to be able to recognize some of the characteristics and powers that this person may exhibit as he imposes his will on the world.

One must realize that deceived people do not know that they are deceived, and that a person will remain deceived unless they diligently and honestly put forth the effort to search for and accept truth. No one on earth is immune to being deceived or causing deception. In fact, the Bible says that the whole world has been deceived except for the elect of God.

The truth is that there is not a person alive who knows every biblical truth in exact detail. Therefore, no one can totally rely upon another person for their understanding of God's word. This is why the elect are instructed to study to show themselves approved before God and to work out their own salvation in fear and trembling. See 2.Tim.2:14-16; Eph.2:12-13.
Who is the Antichrist?

First let us remove some of the mystique about the name Antichrist. Simply put the Antichrist is an individual who is against the true Christ and/or is attempting to pass himself off as the true Christ. In either case this individual is in opposition to God the Father and Jesus Christ and their teachings.

The Antichrist is the same dynamic and charismatic individual described elsewhere in the Bible as the Beast who is the leader of a powerful religious governmental system that controls an alliance of nations called the Beast. The Antichrist is the individual who has absolute authority, power, and control over all religious, philosophical, economic, and political aspects of people who live under his control.

It is very important to understand that this individual called the Antichrist and the Beast is not Satan the Devil, but is in Satan's service and is a representative of Satan's demonic spiritual government, just like the False Prophet (Rev.16:13; 20:10). The Bible clearly states that Satan the Devil is a master at the art of deception: "He is that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world" (Rev.12:9). He has been a liar from the very beginning (Jn.8:44). The Antichrist is one of his most clever deceptions of all time, which will deceive all but the elect of God.

Signs and Miracles

The Antichrist, who is the leader of the alliance of nations called the Beast, will ascend to power accompanied by supernatural signs and miracles and will be accepted as a god in the flesh by most people on earth. Notice what Jesus says about the false christs and prophets who will precede his arrival as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Matthew 24:23-31 Paraphrased

"Then if anyone says to you, Behold, here is the Christ; or, Here he is! Do not believe it. For false christs will rise up, and false prophets. And they will give great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I tell you beforehand. Then if they say to you, Behold, he is in the wilderness; do not go out. Behold, he is in the inner rooms; do not believe" (vs.23-26). See also Mk.13:21-22.

Throughout the centuries, many false Messiahs and false prophets have come and gone. During the time of trouble, at the end of the age, religious deception will be so intense that the only ones who will not be deceived are the elect of God who diligently follow the true God. In the following scriptures Jesus describes the major events that will accompany his arrival on earth.

Jesus says that his return will not be a silent or inconspicuous occurrence; it will be as lightning, which is always accompanied by a loud thunderous noise:
"For as lighting comes out of the east and shines as far as the west so also will be the coming of the Son of man" (v27).

Jesus also describes the cataclysmic celestial events that will take place before his return and the gathering of the elect:

"And immediately after the affliction of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light, and the stars will fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of man will appear in the heavens. And then all the tribes of the land will wail. And they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and much glory. And he will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather his elect from the four winds; from one end of the heavens to the other" (vs.29-31).

The signs that precede Christ's return are awesome events that will occur in the heavens. The sun will become dark (Mk.13:24-26), the moon will not reflect sunlight to the earth, and the stars (Greek 'aster') will be moved out of their orbits. These signs will be apparent to everyone on earth. When Jesus returns in all his glory and power, his very presence will disrupt the physical universe. See Ex.19:16-18; 24:17; Isa.13:9-13; 24:1-5; Joel 2:10-12, 30; Hag.2:6-7.

Every person alive on earth at the time of Christ's return will be aware of these events that will occur in the heavens. Most people will be terrified and fear for their lives. Some will be terrified because they know that Christ is returning to destroy them, and others will be in fear because they think that the world is coming to an end.

The magnitude of the events that will accompany Christ's return will be far from secret or silent; they will be terrifying! All of the scriptures that speak of the appearance of the Beast leader and his Beast alliance of nations tell us that he will arrive before the events that precede Christ's coming. He will be alive as Christ pours destruction upon the earth and its inhabitants for their great wickedness and rebellion against God.

**John, Peter, and Paul**

The apostles John, Paul, and Peter warned of teachers and prophets who would come teaching heresies and they foretold that many people would follow these people and their lies.

At the time John, Paul, and Peter were inspired to write their letters, most of the elect of God thought that the return of Christ was imminent. Because this was not the case, the things these apostles said concerning people and conditions that would exist just before the return of Christ were mostly prophetic.
John

At the close of the first age of the church and before he was shown the things that pertained to the end of the age, the apostle John spoke about those who opposed Christ and what he taught about his relationship to God the Father and the elect children of God. As we review what John says about the Antichrist, notice that he says the spirit of God residing within the children of God will separate a child of God from the world, make a child of God sinless, and reveal those who oppose and reject Christ and the Father:

"Young ones, it is the last time: and as you have heard that the Antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but were not a part of us, if they had been one of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out that it should be known that they were not a part of us" (1.Jn.2:18-19 Para.).

John speaks of a prophecy that those to whom he was writing already knew about. He tells the elect of God that the fulfillment of this prophecy was already in progress at that time. He goes on to say that those who were against Christ at that time were never true sons of God, and that they had revealed their true nature and purpose by leaving the true body of Christ.

"And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I did not write to you because you did not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth" (1.Jn.2:20-21 Para.).

John confirms that those who have the spirit of God have the knowledge and ability to discern truth from error in spiritual matters, and that those who are liars and deceivers will be known by those who have the spirit of God within them, because the spirit of God reveals truth. See Jn.14:17, 15:26, 16:12-13; 1.Cor.2:12-13.

Because the spirit of God reveals truth, it is extremely important that each child of God during the end of this age listen very carefully to what the spirit says concerning the Antichrist and his religious and governmental system.

Who is a Liar?

Those who oppose Christ do not teach the truth concerning Jesus as the Creator God and Savior of humanity. These people also deny the individuality of the Father and the Son and they are liars in the eyes of God. The scriptures clearly show that the Antichrist will not teach the truth of God, but he will teach a lie:

"Who is the liar, but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denies the Father and the Son. Every one that denies the Son does not have the Father. The one who confesses the Son, truly has the Father also" (1.Jn.2:22-23 Para.).
The truly converted of the first age of the church understood exactly what John was saying concerning the Father, Christ, and the spirit of God, because they were taught the mysteries concerning the plan of God by the apostles. However, this knowledge was lost when the early church disappeared shortly after the apostle John’s death.

The Seed

"Everyone being begotten of God [the Father] does not sin, because his [the Father’s] seed [spirit of God] abides in him, and he is not able to sin, because he has been born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the Devil are revealed: Everyone failing to practice righteousness or love his brother is not of God" (1.Jn.3:9-10 Para.).

It is impossible to understand what John is saying here, unless one understands that the spirit of God within a child of God keeps them in a sinless condition before God the Father. As long as a child of God is seeking to live a righteous life and does not willfully and habitually practice sin, no sin is imputed to him. It is this same spirit of God that reveals to the elect of God who is and who is not of God. One of the major signs of the Antichrist/Beast is that he is a sinner according to the biblical definition of sin; therefore, it is necessary for all who are called of God to fully understand what sin is and is not, so that they will not be deceived by the Antichrist or his state religion which is led by the False Prophet.

Good and Evil Spirits

In the first three verses of 1. John, chapter 4, John speaks of testing for evil influence and he shows that a major key in this testing process is the understanding that Christ’s spirit resides within the children of God:

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone forth into the world. By this know the spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus has come in the flesh is from God. And every spirit which does not acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh is not from God: and this is the antichrist which you heard is coming, and now is already in the world" (1.Jn.4:1-3 Para.). See also 2.Jn.v.7; Matt.24:4-5.

Almost all opposition to God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the children of God comes from the evil influence of spirit-beings. Therefore, it is extremely important for God’s children to be able to discern the difference between a good and an evil spiritual influence.

John says that a child of God can determine if a spirit (i.e., a spirit being or spiritual influence) is from God or not. If a spirit acknowledges that Christ has come in the flesh, it is good. If this acknowledgment is not made, this spirit or spiritual influence is evil and it is in opposition to God the Father and Jesus Christ.
On the surface it seems that the formula John gives to determine the character of a spirit-being or spiritual influence is simple and direct, and it is. However, the key to understanding John's instructions is to understand what he means when he says, "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh."

Most people will admit that the person Jesus lived and was a religious leader. Some will acknowledge that he was a prophet, and some will acknowledge him as the prophetic Savior of humanity. However, very few truly understand or will acknowledge him as the Creator God who became the Savior, died, was resurrected, and now lives in the flesh of the children of God.

Another important identifying sign of the Antichrist is that he will not acknowledge that Christ has come in the flesh in the same manner as the scriptures teach.

**Peter**

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who shall privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many [the majority of people] shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of"  (2.Pet.2:1-2 KJV).

There are many things that people consider to be truth; however, what God reveals as the way of truth is not what most people believe as truth. It is God's way of truth that most people hate and ridicule. A number of prophecies tell us that the Antichrist will speak blasphemous things against God and his teachings.

**Paul**

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. If anyone comes preaching another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit [an evil, lying spirit], which you have not received, or a different gospel, than the one you accepted"  (1.Cor.11:3-4 Para.).

During the lifetime of the apostle Paul, those who opposed Jesus Christ were preaching another Jesus and another gospel. This same false Jesus and message is still being preached and taught today. The Antichrist as the leader of the Beast alliance of nations will exist just before Christ's return and he will promote himself as a savior of humanity, but he will have his own deceptive good news message for humanity.
"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness: whose end shall be according to their works" (1.Cor.11:13-15 KJV).

Although verses 13-15 speak of those who are counterfeit ministers of Christ, the same basic concepts apply to the Antichrist/Beast, the False Prophet, and those who are in service to them as their representatives.

The Man of Sin

"Do not let anyone deceive you in any way: because that day will not come unless there first comes a falling away [departure from the faith], and the man of sin is revealed, who is the son of perdition" (2.Thess.2:3 Para.).

An interesting thing about this man of sin is that Paul also calls him the son of perdition. The word translated into English as perdition is from the Greek word apoleia which refers to an everlasting state of torment in this context. The Bible clearly shows that wicked humans will have their life terminated with fire. No human is going to be tormented in fire forever; therefore, the being who inhabits the physical body of the Man of Sin (Son of Perdition) is not human. It is a spirit-being who will try to deceive people into believing that he is a god-being.

Deception and Arrogance

"This is the one who opposes and exalts himself over everything being called God, or object of worship; and he is to sit in the temple of God, as God; in order to show that he is a god" (2.Thess.2:4 Para.).

In his arrogance, this powerful spirit-being masquerading as a human will desecrate the temple of the true God in Jerusalem by entering into it and sitting there in defiance of the true God in order to prove to the world that he is indeed a god, and that the true God is no god.

"Do you not remember, that, I told you these things when I was with you? And now you know the thing holding him [Man of Sin/Son of Perdition/Antichrist] back from being revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness already works: only he is holding back [being held back] now, until it comes out of the midst" (2.Thess.2:5-7 Para.).

Paul had already talked with them about the Antichrist and told them that this individual was being restrained from coming out of the middle of something. The thing that this individual comes out of, according to visions of Daniel and the apostle John, is the alliance of nations symbolized by the beast that came out of the sea. Therefore, it is very clear that wherever this powerful and fierce beast-like alliance of nations is located in the end of the age, the Antichrist will be there as its supreme leader.
"And then the lawless one [Man of Sin/Son of Perdition/Antichrist] will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth, and he will be brought to nothing by the brightness of his [Christ's] coming" (2.Thess.2:8 Para.).

Christ will remove this lawless individual from power when he comes to rule the earth. This is the same evil spirit mentioned in Daniel 7:11 who will have his physical body destroyed and will be cast into a lake of fire in his spirit-form.

"His [i.e., the Antichrist's] coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and miracles and lying wonders, And all deceit of unrighteousness of those being lost; because they did not receive the love of the truth in order for them to be saved. And because of this God will send to them, a working of error, for them to believe a lie" (2.Thess.2:9-11 Para.).

Based on God's word, those whom God has called to salvation should know the difference between good and evil; however, many have already been deluded by a false Christianity and many will be deceived by Satan's Antichrist and his religious and political system of government.

Paul gives a dire warning not to allow one's love for the truth of God to erode. Make no mistake, the message of the Antichrist and Satan's religious and political system is not truth; it is great deception designed to destroy one's opportunity to enter the Family and Kingdom of God. His miracles, signs, and wonders will not be from the Sovereign God; they will be from Satan the Devil and are designed to deceive humanity.

The majority of people will believe the Antichrist's message and his great supernatural works, thinking that they are a part of God's plan for the salvation of humanity; however, just the opposite will be true.

Ten Religious Deceptions

It is highly likely that the Antichrist will come as a savior of humanity and attempt to counterfeit some or all of the things that are prophesied about the coming of the true Messiah. Listed below are ten things he may do to attempt to deceive humanity:

1. Demonstrate that he is the prophetic descendant of King David who is supposed to come to rule the world as described in Psalm 2.
2. Send a false Elijah to speak of his coming (Mal.4:5, 6).
3. Appear to gloriously return in the flesh after being fatally wounded (Matt.25:31, 32; Acts 1:11; Rev.1:7).
5. Attempt to make Jerusalem his governments capital (Isa.11 & 12).
6. Establish his rule with deceptive miracles and wonders (Psa.69).
7. Attempt to make an alliance of nations out of the modern ten tribes of Israel and the Jewish nation of Israel (Ezk.37).


9. Proclaim that he has come to bring world prosperity (Isa.11:12).

10. Proclaim that he has come to bring world peace (Psa.96:98).

The ten things noted would add validity to the Antichrist's claims in the religious circles of quasi-Christians and Jews. He may also attempt to counterfeit some or all of the real prophetic signs of the return of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, in order to deceive these people and accomplish his goal of world domination for his master Satan the Devil.

Because Satan appears as a glorious righteous angel and his evil servants mimic this same false righteousness (2.Cor.11:14-15), the appearance of the Antichrist will fool those who do not understand the true meaning of the scriptures that speak about the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Because the central focus of Satan's plan is to deceive people into giving their allegiance and worship to him, his servant the Antichrist will claim to be god in the flesh (2.Thes.2:4). Another servant of Satan, the False Prophet, will force those who are under the control of the Beast's alliance of nations to worship the Antichrist/Beast and his image; thereby, they will actually be worshiping Satan the Devil by proxy.

There is little doubt that on the surface Satan's religious and governmental system under the leadership of the Antichrist and the False Prophet will look very good to most people. This is why they will be very unhappy when they see it being destroyed by Jesus Christ (Rev.18:4-20).

**HOW TO IDENTIFY THE ANTICHRIST**

This section shows a number of ways by which anyone who understands the worship system of the true God will be able to identify the Antichrist and his worship system.

**Oppressive Rule and Forced Idolatry**

Although Christ and the Father's elect will rule from Jerusalem and exercise judgement upon the rebellious nations of the world (Rev.12:5), the Kingdom of God will not be cruel or oppressive, nor will Jesus or those who serve with him force anyone to worship God the Father by bowing down before an image or a representation of his Father or himself.

**God the Father's Worship System**

The scriptures clearly show that, after Jesus Christ returns, he will establish his Father's true worship system. Conversely, the Antichrist and the False Prophet will oppose any attempt of the Jews or anyone else to worship God as instructed under his covenant with national Israel and the elect of God. See Jer.31:30-37.
In regard to the Father's worship system, there are some biblical facts, which will help one to understand the Father's new agreement with national Israel:

- The prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah clearly show that during Christ's rule, a temple worship system with a priesthood and animal sacrifices will exist in Jerusalem and will be officiated over by the male descendants of Zadok who is descended from Eleazar, Aaron's third son. See Ezk.40-46; Zech.14:16-20.
- The sacrificial system contained within the agreement with national Israel and the rest of humanity will be performed in a way that is similar to how it was performed under the first agreement with Israel.
- The commanded observances and holy convocations of God will be observed by all the people on earth.

The Antichrist will do just the opposite of what the Creator God promises to do when he returns as the Messiah to institute a new agreement with national Israel. The Antichrist will stop the Jews from sacrificing at the temple in Jerusalem and will attempt to change and/or eliminate the commanded observance and holy convocations of God.

THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST

In order to understand the worship of the image of the Antichrist/Beast we need to keep in mind that the Antichrist/Beast and the religious leader (the False Prophet) of the alliance of nations are both servants of Satan the Devil and are both committed to the goal of subjecting all humanity to his absolute control.

The Wounded Head

"And I saw one of its heads as if it had been wounded to death; and its fatal wound was healed. And the earth admired the beast. And worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast, saying. Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with it?" (Rev.13:3-4 Para.).

After the Beast alliance of nations has been solidified, its power base has been established, and the Antichrist/Beast has secured his position of authority as the undisputed leader of this alliance, something extraordinary will happen to either this alliance of nations or its leader. One or the other will sustain a fatal wound.

The circumstances surrounding the death and resurrection of the alliance of nations or the Antichrist/Beast will be an incredibly deceptive event. When people see this resurrection they will be astonished and believe that the Antichrist/Beast is a god in the flesh.
Note:

It is difficult at this point in time to determine exactly what or who the head in Revelation 13:3 symbolizes, because the heads of the beast represent both a system of government as well as the evil spirits who control the system through individuals. What is important to recognize is that an extraordinary event will occur surrounding the fatal wound of either the Antichrist/Beast or the Beast's alliance of nations. When this happens, the leader of the state religion who is the False Prophet will initiate and enforce the worship of Satan the Devil (the dragon) through the Antichrist/Beast and his system of government.

A State Religion

"And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and it had two horns like a lamb, but spake like a dragon. And it executes all the authority of the first beast before it. And it makes the earth and those dwelling in it to worship the first beast, that was healed of its deadly wound" (Rev.13:11-12 Para.).

There are a number of important things revealed in verses 11-12 concerning the relationship between the Beast alliance of nations, its supreme leader (the Antichrist/Beast), and its religious leader (the False Prophet):

- The two horns like a lamb are symbolic of religious authority.
- Its religious teachings and policies are that of Satan the Devil, because it speaks like the dragon.
- The second beast is symbolic of an evil state religion and its leader.

Supernatural Power

"And it [the False Prophet] does great signs and even makes fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth before men" (Rev.13:13 Para.).

It is important to understand that the False Prophet and the religious system that he leads will have tremendous supernatural powers with which to deceive people and counter the supernatural works that the elect of God will be doing as they proclaim God the Father's good news message.

"And it [the False Prophet] deceives those dwelling on the earth, because of the signs which were given to it before the beast; saying to those on the earth to make an image of the beast who has the wound of the sword, and lived. And it was given authority to give a spirit to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast could speak, and might cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (Rev.13:14-15 Para.).
The False Prophet has an image made that is either symbolic of the alliance of nations (the beast), its leader (the Beast), or both. This religious leader empowers the image so that it has the ability to speak. Then, he forces people to worship it or suffer death for disobedience. This enforced worship is reminiscent of king Nebuchadnezzar’s forced worship of the image that he had made.

There are many reasons why intelligent people will worship this image. The first is that if anyone does not worship it they will be killed. The second is that people will actually believe that the image is a god, a representation of their god (Antichrist/Beast), or a method through which they may communicate with their god (who is really Satan the Devil).

It is interesting that, when one carefully reads Daniel 3:1-30, it appears that only the leaders of the people were compelled to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image. However, in John's vision, it seems that everyone under the control of the beast alliance of nations must worship the image.

**The Plagues and the Image**

"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor walk" (Rev. 9:20 KJV).

One of the reasons that Christ pours out plagues upon humanity is to bring them to the realization that they are rebelling against God as they practice their idol worship, and that they must stop this practice and worship the true God.

Anyone who seriously studies the Bible should understand that the forced worship of the image(s) of the Antichrist/Beast constitutes idolatry. Upon seeing or hearing of this forced idolatry, the elect of God should understand that this alliance of nations and its worship system is indeed the Beast of the Books of Daniel and Revelation.

**THE MARK AND NAME OF THE BEAST**

Many who study the Book of Revelation are overly concerned with knowing exactly what the mark and the name of the Beast is and how one will receive this mark and name. However, this information is not essential for salvation from eternal death. It really does not matter whether the mark or name is a computer chip implant, a tattoo, or some other thing. The important thing is to be able to recognize the Antichrist/Beast and his state religion and governmental system for what it is. It must be clearly understood that those who are called of God cannot accept the mark or give their allegiance to the Beast so that they can participate in the economic benefits of the Beast system, because this authorization requires a religious commitment to worship the image of the Beast.
THE MARK, NAME, AND NUMBER

"And the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the freemen and the slaves, allow it [the Antichrist's state religion] to give them a mark on their right hand, or on their foreheads: so that none can buy or sell, except they have the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of its name. Here is wisdom. Let him having reason count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and its number is six hundred and sixty-six" (Rev.13:16-18 Para.).

Throughout history, many who have studied the Bible and secular history have tried to determine the name of the individual that is represented by the number 666. The number 666 is even recorded as being associated with king Solomon and the amount of gold that he received as tribute during the height of his reign (1.Kgs.10:14; 2.Chron. 9:13). There seems to be no end to the individuals and things that have been found to have this numerical reference attached to them.

Even though the number 666 can be attached to people, places, and things in the past, present, and future, is a full understanding of the prophetic number 666 necessary before the appearance of the Antichrist and his religious and political form of government? Actually, it is more important to understand the prophetic events surrounding the Antichrist and to be prepared to be loyal to God and his way of life to the very end.

People have assumed that, because verse 18 says that the number 666 is the number of a man, this number can only be attached to an individual. The reality is that in the Greek language, the number of a man can also mean a human number or a number of humanity. Although the number 666 may very well identify a specific individual, it may also identify and be associated with the Beast's system of religion and government. The number 666 could very well represent the apex of human perfection, because under the leadership of the Antichrist/Beast, the magnificent religious, governmental, and economic system of the beast alliance of nations will appear to be the best system ever devised.

In the study of the numerical symbolism of the Bible, the number 6 is associated with humanity; therefore, the number 666 appears to identify humanity. Because God the Father allows an evil global system to exist before his Son's return, the number 666 could very well be viewed in the context of the entire religious, economic, and governmental system that is led by the Antichrist who is in the service of Satan (2.Thes 2:4).

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

It is well known in biblical and rabbinical teachings that the phrase, in the name of, is used to connect the one having authority to the one from whom the authority comes. It is also used to connect a teacher with the authority and respect of his own teacher. Therefore, it is logical to assume that this same meaning is attached to the name of the Beast and its religious governmental system. The same association will exist between the Antichrist/Beast and those having its name or mark.
A Sign of Allegiance

Refusal to take the mark of the Antichrist constitutes rebellion against him and his religious and governmental system, and this will not be tolerated. All who are found guilty of this type of rebellion will be put to death. Everyone must comply with the worship system that the Antichrist/Beast will institute through the False Prophet, and must worship the image of the Beast. In addition, everyone will have to register with the system and receive the mark or name of the Beast. Without the identifying mark, a person will not be able buy or sell or participate in the economic system of the Antichrist's/Beast's alliance of nations. Therefore, the mark or name of the beast is a sign of one's allegiance to this evil person and his religious governmental system.

It is obvious there will be many undesirable physical consequences for not accepting this mark. For those who worship the true God, the threat of physical punishment and hardships for not accepting the mark are minimal compared to the loss of eternal life for accepting it.

Only Two Options

"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascends for ever and ever: and they shall have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name" (Rev.14:9-11 KJV).

When the mark of the Antichrist/Beast is instituted, there are only two options for a person living within the geographical areas controlled by the beast system. Either one takes the mark and worships and serves the Beast and his image, or one does not take the mark and does not worship the Beast and his image. Anyone who must choose to take or not take the mark must consider the following:

- If one does not worship the Beast and his image, he will be persecuted and probably killed.
- If one does worship the Beast, God will persecute him and probably kill him.
- If a child of God takes the mark, that person loses their salvation.

Most of the world will be deceived by the power and charisma of the Antichrist/Beast and the obvious benefits of his religious system of government. Therefore, most will willingly worship his image, and take his mark, which signifies their allegiance to him and his government. This will be especially easy to do because the death penalty will hang over the heads of any who refuse to worship him and take his mark.
Although the prospect of one surviving the refusal to worship the image and take the mark seems minimal, there is hope for those who place their trust in the true God and seek his protection. See Rev.3:7-13; 7:1-17; 12:6, 14-16.

God's Punishment

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out your vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men that had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshiped his image" (Rev.16:1-2 KJV).

Remember that, during the rule of the Antichrist and his religious system, the people of God will be proclaiming the true gospel and Jesus Christ will be sending devastating plagues upon those who take part in the Antichrist's alliance of nations and have his mark and worship his image.

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that had worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Rev.19:20 KJV).

The two evil spirits that enforce the worship of the image and the marking of those who consent to be marked as a sign of their allegiance to Satan's system of worship and government will be cast into a lake of fire after the return of Jesus Christ.

The Victorious Elect

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" (Rev.15:1-2 KJV).

Those who are called of God to salvation during the terrifying times of the Antichrist's rule and remain true to their great calling will receive tremendous rewards in the Kingdom of God:

"And I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgement was given to them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev.20:4 Para.).
The Important Names

During the end of the age, there are two extremely important names that will have a more dramatic impact on the lives of the children of God than the name or mark of the Antichrist/Beast. These are the names of the Father and his Son. Notice what is said about these two names:

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads" (Rev.14:1 KJV).

There are only a certain number of people that will have the name of the Father written in their foreheads when Christ returns.

"And to the angel [messenger] of the church in Philadelphia write; These things says he [Jesus Christ] that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens; I know your works: behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name" (Rev.3:7-8 Para.).

Notice the emphasis upon having kept Christ's word and not denying Christ's name. It is for this reason that God will empower and use those of the Philadelphia church to perform a great work for him in the end of the age.

SUMMARY

Although it is extremely important to be able to recognize the Antichrist, his image and mark, the False Prophet, and the religious governmental system which they administer for Satan the Devil when they appear on the worlds scene, it is even more important for one to be committed to making the right decisions concerning one's allegiance to God the Father.

By B.L. Cocherell and Charles E. Barrett

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CHAPTER
SEVENTEEN

THE TEN HORNS OF THE PROPHETIC HOUR

There has been much confusion about the identity of the prophetic ten toes of iron and clay (Dan.2:33;41-43) and the ten horned Beast alliance of nations (Rev.13:1-2) in relationship to the ten horns of the prophetic hour (Rev.17:12-14).

Many believe that the ten toes/kings/nations of Daniel and Revelation refer to an economic alliance of nations in Europe and see this alliance of nations as the manifestation of the last of seven resurrections of the Roman Empire and its Babylonian religious system. Many also believe that this religious/political system is symbolized by the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image, the ten horns of the sea beast, and the ten horns of the prophetic hour.

Although there may be some similarities between the religious/political system of the Roman Empire and the Beast's religious/political system of government, it does not explain the ten nations of the prophetic hour, which are aligned with the Beast, hate the Great Whore, and make war with Christ at his coming (Rev.17:12-14).

Moreover, the only reference in the entire Bible that could remotely refer to the Roman empire as a prophetic entity during the end of the age is found in Daniel 11:30, which says the ships of Chittim shall come against the king of the north. In ancient times, Chittim referred to the island of Cyprus and it can be associated with the Roman ships of Admiral Popilius in 168 B.C.. However, because there is no mention in the Books of Daniel or Revelation about the Roman Empire, it seems highly unlikely that it plays a major role in the end of the age events.

The Image and its Feet

"Behold a certain great image! That image stood before you with a brilliant brightness; and its form was dreadful. The head of this image was of fine gold; its breasts and its arms were of silver; its belly and its thighs of bronze; its legs of iron, its feet were partly of iron and partly of clay" (Dan.2:31-33 Para.).

The Stone Smashes the Feet

"A stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, were together broken into pieces, and they became like chaff on the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away; so that no trace was found of them: and the stone that struck the image became a great mountain [government], and filled the whole earth" (Dan.2:34-35 Para.).
The ten toes (kings/nations) attached to the feet of the two legs of the image described in the second chapter of Daniel have never materialized in history and neither has the stone's (Christ's) kingdom, which will destroy the ten toes. Therefore, there can be no doubt that these prophecies are for the period of time associated with Christ's return in the future.

The Fourth Kingdom

"And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron: inasmuch as iron crushes and smashes all things: and as the iron that shatters all these, it will crush and shatter. And as for the feet and toes that you saw, these shall be partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it the strength of iron, because you saw the iron mixed with potters clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron, and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly fragile. And as you saw this iron mixed with the clay of the clay, they shall be mixed with the seed of men: but they shall not adhere to one another, even as iron does not mix with clay" (Dan.2:40-43 Para.).

The fourth kingdom with its legs of iron and feet of iron and clay that will exist during the end of this age will be as strong as iron (the Sea Beast, Rev.13:3-4); however, the feet and toes of the image are both strong and weak, which is symbolic of a powerful alliance of nations that is divided in its aims and goals and/or has a very fragile balance between its weak and strong components.

The Ten Horns of the Prophetic Hour

"And the ten horns you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received their kingdom; but will receive authority as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and their power and authority they shall give to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb [Jesus Christ], and the Lamb will overcome them: because he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and the ones with him are the called and elect, and faithful ones" (Rev.17:12-14 Para.).

There are four important things to note concerning these ten kings/nations who will align themselves with the Sea Beast:

1. They will not be allied with the Sea Beast's ten-nation alliance until the last few days before Christ returns.
2. They will only be allowed to align themselves with the Sea Beast's alliance of nations for one prophetic hour (15 days).
3. They will give their total support to the Sea Beast's alliance.
4. They will fight Christ and the elect of God when they return to conquer the earth.
The Sea Beast's alliance of ten nations called the Beast, along with the Earth Beast, which is the state religion of the Beast alliance of nations, will be given authority over the earth for 3½ years, whereas the ten nations of Revelation 17:12-14 will be controlled by the Sea Beast (the king of the north, Dan.11:40-45) and only exist under its control for one prophetic hour (about fifteen days). Therefore, these ten nations of the prophetic hour are not the Sea Beast, but only serve it for a short time, and because they are not the Sea Beast, the question of who these ten horns (nations) of the prophetic hour are still needs to be answered.

The Ten Toes and Ten Horns

Chapter two of Daniel describes an image with a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, and a belly and thighs of brass. Below the knees are two legs of iron. At the bottom of these two legs are feet with five toes each composed of iron and clay. During the time these ten toes (kings/nations) exist, the stone (Jesus Christ) will be cut out of a mountain (the Kingdom of God) and smash the feet and toes (Dan.2:34-35).

The major cause of people's confusion about the identity of the ten kings/nations symbolized by the ten toes in Daniel 2:33-35, the ten horns of Revelation 17:12-14, and the ten horns of Daniel 7:7 and Revelation 13:1-2 and 17:9-10, is not understanding that there are two distinct and separate 10 nation alliances being identified. One ten nation alliance is the Beast (king of the north) who is allied with the Great Whore and the other ten nation alliance is an alliance of two groups of five nations that will combine to form the ten horns of the prophetic hour of Revelation 17:12-14 (the kings of the north and south).

When one carefully reads the description of king Nebuchadnezzar's image, one will notice that the head of gold is identified as Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, and the silver portion, along with the other parts of brass, iron, and iron mixed with clay, are not identified. If chapter 8 of Daniel is a parallel account of this image, history seems to indicate that the Medes and probably the Medo-Persian empire and the Greek empire under Alexander the Great are the symbolic fulfillment of the second and third empires symbolized by the great image of the second chapter of Daniel. This leaves the fourth empire still unidentified.

The Grecian kingdom was eventually divided into four sections out of which developed two kingdoms of the north and south: the Seleucid Empire with headquarters usually in northern Syria and the Ptolemaic Empire located in Egypt. Perhaps these empires are symbolic of the two legs of the image.

If the Seleucid and Ptolemaic Empires are representations of the ten toes and the ten horns of the prophetic hour, we should be looking for events to occur concerning the nations to the north and to the south of Jerusalem and Judea that are similar to the ones that occurred around 168-165 B.C. If these nations are representative of future events, a king of the north and a king of the south who each control five nations or combinations of five nations must come to power.
The Book of Daniel places the prophetic context of the ten toes and ten horns of the prophetic hour in the kingdoms of the North and South that surround Jerusalem. Moreover, the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation almost exclusively focus on the peoples of the House of Israel who are scattered among the nations, the peoples of the House of Judah (the Israelis), the city of Jerusalem, and the holy Temple. And historically, the Seleucid kingdom of Syria and the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt were once the North and South kingdoms. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect the future north and south kings to be located in these geographical areas. Therefore, it should be fairly easy to determine who the king of the North (five nations) and the king of the South (five nations) are in relation to Jerusalem.

In order to identify the nations that are represented by the two legs and ten toes of Daniel and the ten horns of the prophetic hour of Revelation, we must find nations or groups of nations that fulfill all the following criteria that are given for them:

- They are separated into two groups of five nations each (Dan.2:40-43).
- They are to the north and to the south of Israel (Dan.11:6-15).
- They come together in one prophetic hour before Christ's return (Rev.17:12).
- They have an intense hatred of the Great Whore who represents a religion (Rev.17:16).
- These nations will be destroyed by Christ at his return (Dan.2:44; Rev.17:14).

Because the two legs of Daniel's image (the kings of the north and south) were once located squarely in the Middle East (with Jerusalem at their center), it is logical that the ten future kings will also arise in that area. And that is just where the Bible places them; therefore, we should be looking for five kings (nations) located to the north and five to the south of Jerusalem.

The Nations Surrounding Israel

The only prophecies that speak of ten kings/horns/nations that will exist just before Christ's return and war against Israel, the Jews, and Christ are found in the Books of Psalms, Daniel, and Revelation. Daniel's prophecy only alludes to two separate groups of ten nations (ten toes/ten horns), but the Book of Revelation clearly defines two separate groups of ten nations: one that is the Sea Beast alliance of ten nations, and one ten nation alliance that serves the Sea Beast. The only reference to the names of ten nations that oppose Israel (the Jews) during the end of the age is found in Psalm 83.
Psalm 83 Paraphrased

"O God do not keep yourself silent, do not be speechless; do not be still, O God For your enemies are roaring: and those who hate you have lifted up their head. They take shrewd council against your people [the Israelis]; they plot against your hidden ones. They have said, Come, let us cut them off from being a nation; and the nation of Israel will not be recalled again. For they have plotted together with one heart; they have made an agreement against you" (vs.1-5).

Notice the reference to the hidden ones. This is most likely a reference to the elect of God who are being protected in the holy land while they proclaim the gospel prior to the return of Christ. The goal of these people who plot against the Israelis is to wipe them from the face of the earth.

"Even the tents of Edom, and of the descendants of Ishmael, Moab, Hagarite; Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, and Philistia and the inhabitants of Tyre. Also Assyria has joined with them: they are an arm to the sons of Lot" (vs.6-8).

These verses list the peoples of Edom, the descendants Ishmael, Moab, Hagarite, Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, and Philistia, the inhabitants of Tyre, and Assyria and the sons of Lot who comprise ten ancient nations in the Middle East that surrounded Israel.

Nowhere in history has this combination of nations opposed Israel; therefore, this Psalm is clearly a prophecy for the future, and it is highly likely that their modern-day descendants will be the nations that comprise the ten nations of the prophetic hour that will be allied with the Sea Beast and war against the Israelis in the last days before Christ's return.

These Nations Destroy the Great Whore

Very close to Christ's return, and perhaps during the last two plagues that Christ pours out on the Beast alliance of nations and the world, the ten nation alliance of Psalm 83 that is to the north and south of Israel will be motivated by God to destroy the capital city of the Beast's Babylonian religious system:

"And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the whore, and will make her desolate and naked, and they will eat her flesh, and will burn her down with fire. For God gives it into their hearts to do his mind, and to act in one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman who you saw is the great city, having a kingdom over the kings of the earth" (Rev.17:16-18 Para.).
Although the scriptures do not say why these ten nations hate the Great Whore, when one understands the religions of these two ten-nation alliances, it is easy to see that what takes place here is one powerful evil religious system destroying another powerful evil religious system with which it has major unreconcilable theological differences regarding who and what to worship.

Who is the Whore?

"The woman you saw is the great city that has rule over the kings of the earth" (Rev.17:18 Para.).

The only city in today's world that rules over kings is Vatican City within the city of Rome that sits on seven hills. This seems to be the great and powerful religion that has its capital in a city close to the sea that will meet its fate at the hands of the ten nations in a very short time, perhaps in just 15 days (one prophetic hour):

"The seven heads are seven mountains [nations/empires] on which the woman [evil religious system] sits. And the kings are seven: five have fallen, and one is, and the other has not yet come; and when he does come, he must remain a little while" (Rev.17:9-10 Para.).

The Coming Kingdom of God

"And in the days of these kings [those of the prophetic hour], the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people. It shall break in pieces and destroy all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Because you saw that the stone [Jesus Christ] was cut out of the mountain without hands, and it broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold in pieces; the great God has made known to the king what shall occur after this" (Dan.2:44-45 Para.).

Jesus Christ will completely crush these ten Middle Eastern nations as well as the ten nation Beast alliance during the great battle at Armageddon. And after these evil alliances of nations are destroyed, the God of Heaven (Jesus Christ) will set up a government on earth that will be governed by spirit-beings forever.

SUMMARY

One of the keys to unlocking the meaning of certain prophecies is to understand that some prophecies may have a duality of symbolism and fulfillment. This is clearly the case with some of the prophecies recorded in the Book of Daniel. Therefore, just before Christ's return, we should see events occurring among the nations that surround Israel that are similar to the ones that occurred in this area in 168-165 B.C.
What to Look For

Psalm 83 reveals that there will be ten nations in the Middle East encompassing Jerusalem that will seek to destroy Israel. Because it is no secret that many of the nations that now surround Israel hate her and want her destroyed, what we should look for is ten autonomous nations in the Middle East that are inhabited by the modern descendants of the ten nations mentioned in Psalm 83. We should look for these ten nations to form two alliances: five to the north and five to the south of Israel. These nations will constitute the ten toes of iron and clay of the great image of Daniel 2:42-43, which are different from the ten-nation Beast.

By B.L. Cocherell and Charles E. Barrett

b2w17
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE 144,000 AND THE GREAT MULTITUDE

Revelation, chapter 7, mentions 144,000 people of the tribes of Israel who are sealed in their foreheads and a great multitude of people who come out of tribulation. Then, in chapter 14, there are another 144,000 mentioned who have the name of the Lamb and the Father written on their foreheads. Who are the two groups of 144,000 and the great multitude of people?

THE 144,000 OF CHAPTER SEVEN

The first group of 144,000 are mentioned after the opening of the sixth seal of God's wrath upon the earth, which portrays the violent collapse of the old order of things and seems to follow the general order in which the earth was made fit for humanity's habitation (e.g., the earth, sun, moon, stars, sky, land and sea).

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who will be able to stand?" (Rev.6: 12-17 KJV).

At this point in time, many of those who will have heard the gospel message proclaimed will come to the realization that what they have heard about the wrath of God being poured out upon those who refuse to repent is absolutely true and that their days are numbered. Therefore, in great terror, they will try to hide from the punishment that they know is coming.

Between the Sixth and Seventh Seals

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, or on the sea, or on any tree" (Rev.7:1 KJV).
Four angelic beings hold back the four winds. The English word *winds* is translated from the Greek word *anemos*, which means *winds* and also pertains to the four cardinal points from which the winds blow, but not necessarily the physical wind itself. It is also highly possible that the four winds described as *anemos* are in fact the four winds (spirit-beings) of Zechariah 6:5 who are described as the winds of heaven.

After the four angelic beings hold back the four winds, another spirit-being will come from the east, which is traditionally the direction from where divine manifestations come (Isa.41:1-2; Ezk.43:2-3; Mal.4:1-2). This spirit-being will instruct the four powerful spirit-beings not to proceed with their destruction of the earth, the sea, and the unrepentant wicked of earth's population. This spirit-being has with him the seal of the living God with which he and those who are with him are to seal the servants of God. This is noted in verse 3:

"And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev.7:2-3 KJV).

**144,000 Sealed**

"And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel" (Rev.7:4 KJV).

In verses 6-8 of chapter 7, there are 12,000 Israelites noted as being sealed from each tribe of Israel except for the tribe of Dan, which seems to be replaced by the half tribe of Manasseh. Either the tribe of Dan is included in one of the other tribes or it is left out of the 144,000 for reasons that only God knows.

**Sealed for Their Protection**

Notice the sealing of the 144,000 occurs before God begins executing the events contained in the seventh seal, which is the seven trumpet plagues. The seventh seal is also known as the Day of the Lord (Rev.6:17) and the great tribulation.

It is clear that these people who have been sealed are found worthy to escape the horrors of the coming plagues that are to be poured out on the earth. And because the only ones who are clearly promised protection from this hour of trouble are those of the Philadelphia church noted in Revelation 3:7-13, there seems to be only two possibilities to the identity of this group of 144,000: They are either part of the Philadelphia group of God's elect who are sealed against his wrath because of their faithfulness to him and his ways, or they are the elect of God who have heeded the warnings given to the churches in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3. Because they have repented of their wrong attitudes and behaviors, they are found worthy to escape God's wrath.
More than likely, these 144,000 are a combination of the seven church groupings noted in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 who are all descendants of the tribes Israel. How God reckons bloodlines is not totally understood, but we do know that he knows who both physical and spiritual Israelites are. It is interesting to note that, in Christ's own lineage, there are Gentiles (Rahab of Jericho and Ruth of Moab), yet Christ and his bloodline is considered to be Israelitish of the tribe of Judah.

The Angel With the Inkhorn and Seal

The prophet Ezekiel was also given a vision in which he saw many of God's elect who inhabit Jerusalem sealed against God's wrath in the end of the age.

God's patience toward national Israel will come to an end and he will no longer sit quietly by while the houses of Israel and Judah and their civil and religious leaders commit their abominations and idolatry before him. He will punish them without mercy for their rebellion and wickedness.

"Then he said to me, Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose [part of pagan worship system]. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them" (Ezk.8:17-18 KJV).

Ezekiel 9:1-11 KJV

"He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying. Cause them that have charge over the city [Jerusalem] to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar" (vs.1-2).

Verses 1 and 2 show Christ's avenging army being gathered to begin a great slaughter among humanity. Notice that, among these six men, there is another man who has a writer's inkhorn.

"And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the Lord said to him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (vs.3-4).
Jesus Christ calls to the one with the inkhorn and instructs him to go to those in Jerusalem and mark the servants of God who are heart-broken because of the evil that they see. From the description of what the one with the inkhorn does, it is possible that those who are sealed are a part of the 144,000 spoken of in Revelation 7:3-8.

"Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house. And he said to them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go you forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city" (vs.6-7).

The other five who are standing by are told to follow the one with the inkhorn and begin the slaughter among the inhabitants of Jerusalem who have not been marked for survival by the one with the inkhorn.

"And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord God! will you destroy all the residue of Israel in your pouring out of your fury upon Jerusalem? Then said he to me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The Lord has forsaken the earth, and the Lord sees not. And as for me also, mine eye will not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head" (vs.8-10).

The question that Ezekiel asked and the answer that he received tells us that, although the inhabitants of Jerusalem are the primary focus of these angels of death, the rest of the house of Israel and Judah who are scattered among the nations are also slaughtered by the death angels. It is also clear that this slaughter upon the house of Israel and Judah will not stop until all those who are to be killed are killed.

"And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as you have commanded me" (v.11).

The time setting of both Revelation 7:1-8 and Ezekiel 9:1-11 is right before the Day of the Lord, which is the time period called The Great Tribulation in which God will pour out his wrath upon all humanity. From this point in time until Christ's return, the faithful servants of God will be separated from the rest of humanity and will be protected from the wrath of God. However, the elect who have not been faithful will suffer along with the rest of humanity as God's wrath is poured out upon the earth, the sea, and the wicked in order to complete the preparation of the earth for the invasion of Christ and his army of spirit-beings.

In Revelation 7:1-8 we see that at least 144,000 of the elect of God from the tribes of Israel will be protected from the final wrath of God that will be poured out upon unrepentant humanity and some of the elect who have not repented of their sinful attitudes and behaviors.
With the sealing of the 144,000 servants of God, it is highly likely that the gospel age of salvation will end and the full fury of God's wrath will be poured out upon the earth and will not cease until Christ and his army of spirit-beings conquer the Beast power and the earth.

THE 144,000 OF CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Rev.14:1 NIV).

Notice that these 144,000 have both the name of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) and God the Father written on their foreheads, which indicates that these are the elect of God who have participated in the first resurrection and have been given eternal and immortal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.

"And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they [the 144,000] sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth" (Rev.14:2-3 NIV).

These 144,000 apparently have an extremely high position in the Family and Kingdom of God, because they are shown to be at the throne of God where the four living creatures and the elders are in attendance. There is no mention of this 144,000 being descended from the tribes of Israel. What is noted is that they have been redeemed from the earth, which seems to indicate that they are both Israelites and non-Israelites that remained undefiled from other religions by being faithful to God:

"These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. These follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been purchased from among men and offered as first-fruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless" (Rev.14:4-5 NIV).

Notice that these people who take part in the first resurrection were not defiled with women (false religion); they are pure virgins (spiritually pure and undefiled). These people were redeemed from among men. The only way a person can be redeemed is through the blood of Christ. Throughout history, many have been called to participate in the first resurrection; however, the scriptures show that only a few out of this vast number are found worthy of eternal and immortal life. Among those who have been found worthy, there seem to be even fewer who have remained pure and undefiled from the influence of Satan's religions. Whether they are of Israelitish descent or not, what is clear is that they are indeed a very special group of people who have earned a very high reward and position in the Family and Kingdom of God.
In Revelation 14:1-5, we see 144,000 who, because of their faithfulness to God the Father and Jesus Christ, have obtained eternal and immortal life and accompany Christ as he arrives at Mount Zion to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

From the information that is given about the 144,000 that are mentioned in Revelation, chapters 7 and 14, it is clear that these people are the elect of God who have received special favor because of their faithfulness to God the Father and Jesus Christ.

**THE GREAT MULTITUDE**

"After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could number, out of every nation, and tribes, and peoples, and languages, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, having been clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And they cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb" (Rev.7:9-10 Para.).

After John sees the 144,000 sealed for their protection from the wrath of God, he sees a great multitude of people standing before the thrones of God the Father and Jesus Christ. This event clearly takes place after the return of Christ and the first resurrection. Therefore, it seems that these people are the elect of all ages who have participated in the first resurrection and have been given eternal and immortal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.

"And one of the elders answered, saying to me, These having been clothed in the white robes, who are they? And from where did they come? And I said to him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are those who have come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev.7:13-14 Para.).

Many have assumed that whenever the term 'great tribulation' appears that it automatically means 'The Great Tribulation' at the end of the age. However, this may or may not be the meaning of this term in verse 9, because many have suffered great persecution and tribulation throughout the centuries for their belief in the true God and Jesus Christ. What is clear is that this great multitude who are drawn from among the nations of the earth have come through great trials and were found worthy to be granted salvation.

"Because of this they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. And he who sets on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them. And they shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. Because the Lamb which is in the throne will shepherd them, and will lead them to the fountains of living waters: and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev.7:15-17 Para.).
In Revelation 7:9-17, we see a vast multitude of people from various national origins who have overcome great adversity and who will be comforted by God and serve him day and night in his temple.

**SUMMARY**

The two groups of 144,000 and the great multitude noted in the Book of Revelation seem to be mentioned in order to clearly show that what each individual does and the attitudes and behaviors that one has during the time just before Christ's return will dramatically impact their safety. These same attitudes and behaviors will also determine, for some individuals, the rewards and positions that people will be given in the Family and Kingdom of God.

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b2w18
CHAPTER
NINETEEN

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

One of the most misunderstood topics of the Bible is the resurrection of the dead at Christ's return. Most people do not even begin to comprehend the magnitude of the events that surround this climactic event or its importance in the overall plan of God for the future of humanity. The first resurrection will undoubtedly be one of the most awesome events to ever take place. Several cataclysmic, earthshaking events will happen the day that Jesus returns to the earth. The following are three of these major events, which concern the Father's elect:

- The resurrection of the righteous dead to immortality
- The change of the living righteous to immortality
- The rewarding of the righteous for diligent effort and sacrifice

Jesus Appears in The Sky

One of the first events on this day is the gathering of the elect of God to meet Jesus in the atmosphere above the earth. As Jesus enters the earth's atmosphere and lights up the sky with his glory, the angels will begin to collect the righteous of all ages:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt.24:29-31 KJV). See also Isa.43:5-7; Mk.13:24-27; 14:62; Rev.1:7.

The Dead Rise First

In this great day, everyone who has obtained salvation will rise to meet Jesus as he enters the atmosphere. But all of the righteous who have died over the centuries will be resurrected first:

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep [dead], that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep" (1.Thes.4:13-15 KJV). See also 1.Cor.15:51-54.
"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1.Thes.4:16-17 KJV). See also 2.Thes.2:1-8.

The Participants in the First Resurrection

Those whom the Father has called to salvation from the time of Adam to the return of Christ are the ones who will be in the first resurrection. They are the righteous of all ages who have qualified during their lifetime to become the leaders of the world:

"And at that time Michael shall stand up, the great ruler stands for the sons of your people: and there shall be a time of distress, such as has not been from the existence of a nation until that time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name is found written in the book" (Dan.12:1 Para.).

The Righteous Dead of All Ages

In the Book of Hebrews, chapter 11, there is a long list of righteous individuals who died without receiving God's promises:

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb.11:39-40 KJV). See also Heb.11:13.

These righteous individuals have not yet received their reward. They neither received their reward then nor have they received it to this day. They are dead; they are not alive in heaven or any other place. However, the prophets and the righteous of all ages including Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and David will receive their reward at the same time as those who died after the advent of Jesus and those who remain alive at his return. See 1.Thes.4:13-15.

The Change to Immortality

Those who participate in the first resurrection will escape the punishment reserved for the wicked and will live forever as immortal beings in the Family and Kingdom of God: "Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power" (Rev.20:6 KJV). This escape from the second death was also told to the church at Smyrna:

"He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches; He that overcomes will not be hurt of the second death" (Rev.2:11 Para.).

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:23 KJV). See also 1.Tim.6:12; Lk.20:34-35.

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"And this is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life" (1.Jn.2:25 KJV; Tit.3:7).

The quality of life that the righteous are promised is comparable to that which God himself has. God the Father and Jesus Christ are spirit-beings who inherently possess the highest form of life, which is immortality on the divine plane of existence. This kind of life springs forth from itself, it never dies or decays and it is not dependent on any other source to sustain it. See 1.Tim.1:17; 6:12-16.

Christ the Conquering King

When Jesus returns, he will come as a conquering king to establish the headquarters of his Father's earthly government in Jerusalem. This is an event which he and his prophets foretold:

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev.11:15 KJV). See also Dan.2:44; Mic.4:1-3; 1.Cor.6:2-3; 15:24; Rev.12:5; 19:15; 20:4-6.

"And I saw thrones, and they [the elect of God] sat upon them, and judgment was given to them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their right hands: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on 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" (Rev.20:4-6 KJV).

These scriptures show individuals who proclaimed the truth about Jesus and were obedient to God's word and those who will live at the end of the age and not worship the beast system. Because of their performance under extremely difficult circumstances, both groups of individuals will receive a great reward.

Major Responsibilities

Many wrongly assume that the elect will be in heaven forever; however, those in the first resurrection will rule the earth with Jesus for at least a thousand years in which the earth will become a place of peace and prosperity. One of the first major responsibilities for those in the first resurrection is to assist in the conversion of humanity to the ways of God, because the Father and Jesus Christ want everyone to obtain salvation (1.Tim.2:4; 2. Pet.3:9). For this task, the elect of God are being trained through various trials and tests in order to grow in grace and knowledge. As a result of this training, the elect will be able to fulfill an office of king and priest; thereby, they will be able to rule and teach God's truth to those who have never heard or understood the way to salvation.
Inherit the Kingdom

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King [Jesus] say to them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father [God the Father], inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt.25:31-34 KJV). See also Jms.2:5.

Those in the first resurrection will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven as a part of their reward:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.5:3 KJV). See also Matt.5:5.

Inherit all Things

The righteous will not only inherit the Kingdom but also all things. What a tremendous reward to inherit the Kingdom and to be joint-heirs with Jesus of all that will ever exist:

"He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev.21:7 KJV). See also Heb.1:1-2, 5-8.

After the first resurrection, the saints (elect) of all ages will be taken to the heaven of heavens where they will be given their rewards.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized to Jesus Christ was baptized to his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism to death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life [eternal life, immortality]. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:" (Rom.6:1-5 KJV).

AFTER THE FIRST RESURRECTION

After the first resurrection, there will not be a single person left alive on earth with the spirit of God. The earth will have been almost completely destroyed by the events at the end of the age. The people of the earth will be in a state of confusion, terror, and shock; they will be wondering what has happened and how they are going to survive. Into such a world, Christ and the elect of God will return and bring peace, joy, happiness, and harmony.
THE RESURRECTIONS

Many feel that there is only one general resurrection for all of humanity after Christ's return, and that at this resurrection, all who have ever lived and died will either be given eternal life and go to heaven or be sent to eternal torment in a lake of fire. However, this popular belief concerning the resurrection of the good and the wicked cannot be verified in the scriptures. The plan of God for the resurrection of the dead is far more complex and fair than commonly believed.

God is fair, loving, merciful, and true to his promises. He is not the cruel and merciless monster that so many preachers depict. Because God the Father is a God of Love (1.Jn.4:8), he has designed a number of different resurrections so that those who have not known him may know him and have their opportunity to qualify for eternal life.

There is no doubt that each person will have an opportunity to obey God's code of righteous conduct. The only question is when will each individual have this opportunity:

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ, the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1.Cor.15:22-23 Para.).

After the return of Christ and the first resurrection, all the dead will be raised to life, either to have their first opportunity for salvation or to be punished for their failure to obey God. All will eventually give account to God for what they have done with the opportunity God gives them.

Four General Resurrections

In the Book of Revelation, we find the statement: "This is the first resurrection." Logic should tell us that if there is a first resurrection, there must be a second. As we will see, there is not only a first but also a second, a third, and a fourth resurrection of the dead.

The Bible reveals that, at this time in the plan of God for the salvation of humanity, all people fall into one of three categories: the saved, the lost, and those who have not had an opportunity for salvation. All people represented by these categories will take part in one or more of the four general resurrections mentioned in the Bible:

1. The first resurrection at Christ's return is for the righteous dead of all ages and the righteous living, who were given an opportunity for salvation before the return of Christ, and because they lived a life of obedience to God and his ways, they will receive eternal and immortal life in the Kingdom of God. See Rev.20:4-6;12.

2. The second resurrection is for those of national Israel who have never even had an opportunity for salvation. See Ezk.ch.37.
3 The third resurrection is for all those who have lived and died, either having been deceived by Satan's religions or never having heard of God's way of life. These two groups of people have never had an opportunity for salvation; they are the rest of the dead mentioned in Revelation 20:5-13.

4. The fourth resurrection is to the second death for the incorrigible wicked who intentionally disobey and reject God and refuse to obey his way of life. See Rev.20:14-15; 21:8; Dan.12:2.

SUMMARY

The Bible reveals the great love and fairness of God toward humanity through each of these four general resurrections of the dead.

In his infinite wisdom, the Eternal God has carefully designed his plan for humanity so that every person will be given an opportunity to have eternal life. (See the entire 18th chapter of Ezekiel). The vast majority of people who have lived throughout history have died without ever hearing or understanding God's plan.

The comforting truth is that the majority of humanity, past and present, are neither saved nor lost. They simply have not yet been given an opportunity for salvation.

God the Father has provided a way for each individual to be forgiven for their sins through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ. However, in order to reap the rewards of obedience, people must avail themselves of this sacrifice by repenting of their evil and living according to the Law of God. If there is no repentance and no sustained effort to live according to God's ways, God will not grant eternal life; instead, he will destroy the wicked person with fire: "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom.6:23).

"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land:" (Isa.1:18-19 KJV).

The Father's call to salvation is very clear. He will reward obedience and forgive sin. He is patient and merciful and he will not cause the irrevocable termination of a human life unless there is no hope of redemption. God the Father will terminate the life of those who are unwilling to live according to his law because he will not allow the incorrigibly wicked to have eternal life and become a disruptive force to happiness and joy in the Family of God.

God is righteous and will not live with evil, which is repulsive to him. In order for there to be harmony, unity, and eternal happiness in the Kingdom of God, only righteousness can be allowed to exist. The choices for each individual are clear: either one conforms to that which produces happiness and joy or one will cease to exist.

By B.L. Cocherell
Throughout the biblical record, there are many references to the coming of the Messiah who will bring the Kingdom of God to earth and peace and prosperity to humanity. No student of the Bible will deny that the coming of the Messiah is one of its central themes. However, among student and scholar alike, there is much disagreement as to the timing of this great event. Historically and presently, the Jews are waiting for the Messiah's first arrival; most Christians await his second coming, and some anticipate a second and a third coming.

The Messiah Came Once and Will Return

Historical, civil, religious, and other ancient records confirm the authenticity of the biblical record. Historical writings are full of evidence of the existence of the people and places associated with the Bible and the Messiah.

Writings of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Eusebius, and other early church leaders mention Pontius Pilate who ruled Judea from A.D. 26 to 36 and they make reference to his official reports to Emperor Tiberus of the trial and crucifixion of a Jew who many believed to be the Jewish Messiah. Tactius, a Roman historian, mentions the one named Christ who Pontius Pilate condemned to death (Annals xv:44, written A.D. 115-117). Even Jewish history confirms the life and death of Christ.

Because it can be proven from historical records (including the biblical record), that the Messiah did come and fulfill the prophecies of his first coming, it is reasonable to believe what the Bible says about his future return.

When Will Christ Return?

Does anyone know when Christ will return to earth? Many in the past thought they knew, and many today think they know. One group of believers thought he would return in 1844, another group thought he would return in 1914, and yet another group predicted it would be in 1975. People continually set dates and are continually disappointed; however, does this mean that no one will know the date and hour of Christ's return until it actually happens? How many times will the Messiah return? Will it be one, two, or three times? Many will find the answers to these questions both exciting and surprising.

After Jesus had told his disciples about the future destruction of the temple, they came to him privately to find out when it would happen and when the end of the age would come.
The disciples already knew of the prophecies about the Kingdom of God and its eventual rule of the earth. And many Jews of Jesus' day were expecting the Messiah to come and establish the kingdom within their lifetime. See Lk.17:20-24.

"Then if anyone says to you, Behold, here is the Christ; or, There he is! Do not believe. For false christs will rise up, and false prophets. And they will give great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I tell you beforehand. Then if they say to you, Behold, he is in the wilderness; do not go out. Behold, he is in the inner rooms; do not believe" (Matt.24:23-26 Para.). See also Mk.13:21-22.

Throughout the centuries, many false messiahs and false prophets have come and gone. During the time of trouble at the end of the age, religious deception will be so intense that the only ones who will not be deceived are the elect of God who diligently follow the true God.

Notice the clear statement that Christ makes about one event that will accompany his arrival:

"For as the lightning comes forth from the east and shines as far as the west, so also will be the coming of the Son of man" (Matt.24:27 Para.).

Here, Jesus gave a vivid picture of one of the signs which will accompany his return. Lightning is not a silent or inconspicuous occurrence; it is always accompanied by a loud thunderous noise, which is very noticeable.

"And immediately after the affliction of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light, and the stars will fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Matt.24:23-26 Para.).

Cataclysmic celestial events will take place before Christ's return and his gathering of the elect.

"And then the sign of the Son of man will appear in the heavens. And then all the tribes of the land will wail. And they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and much glory. And he will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather his elect from the four winds; from the ends of the heavens to their ends" (Matt.24:30-31 Para.).

The signs which precede Christ's return are awesome events that will occur in the heavens. The sun will become dark (Mk.13:24-26), the moon will not reflect sunlight to the earth, and the stars (Greek: 'aster') will be moved out of their orbits. When Jesus returns in all his glory and power, his very presence will disrupt the physical universe. See Ex.19:16-18; 24:17; Isa.13:9-13; 24:1-5; Joel 2:10-12, 30; Hag.2:6-7.

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Every person alive on earth at the time of Christ's return will be aware of the awesome events which will occur in the heavens. Most people will be terrified and fear for their lives. Some will be terrified because they know that Christ is returning to destroy them, and others will be in fear because they think that the world is coming to an end. The magnitude of the events that will accompany Christ's return will be far from secret or silent; they will be awesome and terrifying.

The End-time Generation

"But learn the parable of the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and it puts out leaves, you know that the summer is near, so also when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors. Truly I say to you, In no way will this generation pass away until all these things have occurred. The heavens and the earth will pass away" (Matt.24:32-35 Para.).

When Jesus gave this parable, the disciples thought Jesus was speaking of their day and their generation. However, as time passed it became apparent that he was speaking of a people and a generation far in the future. When these heavenly events occur, Jesus' return is imminent, and nothing can delay it.

The Day and the Hour

The statement Jesus made in reference to the exact time of his return is in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32. A casual reading of these references seems to indicate that those who believe in a secret return of Jesus are correct. However, as we analyze this subject, we will see that many of the elect will indeed know the exact day and hour when Christ will return:

"But as to that day and that hour, no one knows, neither the angels of heaven but my Father only. But as the days of Noah, so will also be the coming of the Son of man" (Matt.24:36-37 Para.).

"The heavens and the earth will pass away, but My word will not at all pass away. But concerning that day and the hour, no one knows, not the angels, those in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father. Be careful; be wakeful, and pray. For you do not know when the time is" (Mk.13:31-33).

The apostles did not give up in their quest to find out when Jesus would return. After his death and resurrection, they questioned him further about his return:

"Then, indeed, these coming together they questioned him, saying, Lord, do You restore the kingdom to Israel at this time? And he said to them, It is not yours to know times or seasons, which the Father placed in his own authority" (Acts 1:6-7).
It is true that no one, including Jesus, the angels, the apostles, or the prophets knew when Christ would return before his death and resurrection. In Acts 1:7, Jesus says it was not for them to know the timing of these events. But, why were they not told? The primary reason that no one knew these details prior to and after Jesus’ death and resurrection is that it was not necessary for them to know when the end would come. They did not live in the end of the age; therefore, this knowledge would not benefit them.

**Those Who Need to Know**

Because no one but God the Father knows the timing of the end of the age, does it mean that no one will know when Christ will return? As we will see, those who need to know the timing of Christ's return will know, because this knowledge is important to their lives and their mission.

**The Sealed Prophecy**

"And he said, Go your way Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed until the end-time. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tested. But the wicked shall do wrong. And not one of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan.12: 9-10 KJV).

Daniel's prophecy was sealed until the time of the end at which time only the wise would understand. In the Book of Daniel as well as in the rest of the biblical record, there is much information pointing to the end of the age. When this information is combined with the prophecies of the New Testament and the specific events they foretell, the time of Christ's return can be known with certainty. The key to having this knowledge is to be one of the wise, because it is only the wise who will understand the meaning of these events.

**The Two Witnesses**

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy a thousand, two hundred and sixty days, dressed in sackcloth" (Rev. 11:3 Para.).

These two men will begin to witness about the gospel Christ brought, his return, and the Kingdom of God. They will also foretell many of the earthshaking events at the end of the age. Moreover, they will prophecy for 1,260 days or approximately three and a half years, and then they will be killed:

"And when they complete their witness, the beast coming up out of the abyss will make war with them, and will overcome them, and will kill them. And their bodies will be on the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom, and Egypt—where our Lord was crucified" (Rev.11:7-8).
Below are some simple questions and answers about the Two Witnesses which pertain to their knowledge of when Christ will return:

Q. How will they know they are the Two Witnesses of God?
   A. God will tell them.

Q. Will they know when their ministry begins?
   A. Yes!

Q. Will these two know the day when they will be killed?
   A. Yes, because it is 1,260 days from the day they begin their ministry.

Q. Will they know the day of their resurrection?
   A. Yes, because they will understand the prophecies that detail their ministry.

Q. Will these two men know the exact time of Christ's return?
   A. Yes, because they will understand the prophecies concerning their ministry and his return.

"And after three days and a half, a spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet. And great fear fell on the ones beholding them. And they heard a great voice out of heaven saying to them, Come up here. And they went up into heaven in the cloud. And their enemies saw them. And in that hour a great earthquake occurred, and the tenth part of the city fell and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand names of men. And the rest became terrified, and gave glory to the God of heaven" (Rev. 11:11-13).

The Two Witnesses will be dead for three and a half days, and then they will be brought back to life and taken up into heaven. Christ will return very soon after these things begin to happen. Moreover, with a small amount of addition or subtraction, along with the knowledge of other time frames for specific events given in prophecy, any true Christian alive at this time will have little difficulty calculating the time of Christ's return. Yes, the wise will understand:

"For as they were in the days before the flood: eating, and drinking, merry making, and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah went into the ark—and they did not know until the flood came and took them all away—so also will be the coming of the Son of man" (Matt.24:38-39 KJV).

It is important to remember that in Noah's generation, people were so evil that God decided to eliminate the human race. Noah was found to be the only righteous individual in all of humanity. Jesus says that this same condition will prevail at the end of the age. Just as the people in Noah's day did not listen to the call to repentance and the warnings of God's wrath, the vast majority of people in the end of the age will not listen to God's ministers. See Gen.6:5-13.
The Righteous Disappear From Earth

"At that time two will be out in the field; the one is taken away, and the one is left; two grinding at the mill, one is taken, and one is left" (Matt.24:40-41 KJV).

Many feel verses 40 and 41 support a secret return of Jesus; however, these events will neither be secret or silent as many scriptures reveal. See Matt:24-30-31; 26:63-64; 1.Thess.4:16-17; 2.Thess.2:1-8.

A Prophecy for the Future

In verses 42 through 51 of Matthew 24, there is a warning prophecy for a very specific group of people who live during the end of the age:

"Watch, then, for you do not know in what hour your Lord comes" (Matt.24:42 Para.).

In verse 42, Jesus gives a very specific command to watch. But what should we be watching for? Jesus is addressing this instruction to a specific group of individuals. But who are they? Verse 43 gives us the answer to these questions:

"But know this, that if the housemaster had known in what watch the thief comes, he would have watched, and not have allowed his house to be dug through. Because of this, you also be ready, for in that hour you think not, the Son of man comes" (Matt.24:43-44 Para.). See also Rev.3:3.

It is the housemaster (the one who rules the house) that is responsible for watching. The ones who have the responsibility for the care of the house of God (i.e., the church) are the ministers of Christ (1.Tim.3:14-15; Heb.13:7;17). The things to be watched for are world events as they relate to the specific prophecies that will occur at the end of the age.

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the Lord has set over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is the servant whom the Lord shall find so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, he will set him over all his substance" (Matt.24:45-47 Para.).

Who is a wise and faithful minister at the end of the age? He is one who watches and studies current world events as they relate to Bible prophecy and reveals this understanding to those under his care at the proper time.

"But if that evil servant should say in his heart, My Lord delays to come, and should begin to beat his fellow servants, and to eat, and to drink with the drunkards, the lord of that servant will come in a day in which he does not expect, and in an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in two, and will appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt.24:48-51 Para.).
Those who do not watch will not know when Jesus will return. The warning is unmistakable in its meaning: if a minister at the end of the age does not continue to fulfill his responsibility toward Christ and the elect under his care, he will lose his salvation.

**Paul Writes to Thessalonica**

By the time Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, the church understood that Jesus was not going to return in their generation. Paul says that the true elect of God will not be caught unaware by the events that will culminate at the end of the age, because they will understand them:

"But of the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write to you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the children of light, and the children of this day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1.Thes.5:1-6 KJV).

**Christians and the Tribulation**

Those who subscribe to the belief in a secret return of Christ believe Christians will be taken to heaven and spared the horrors and agony of the cataclysmic events just before his return. Others believe that Christians will be protected in some geographical place of safety on earth. But are either of these teachings true? Will there be Christians on earth during this great tribulation? Will Christians be subject to any of the terrifying events at the end of the age?

**Christians Will be Hated**

Many scriptures describe in graphic detail the time known as the great tribulation. There are also many scriptures that show the elect of God will be persecuted, betrayed by their own children and brothers in the faith, brought to trial because of their belief, made to flee for their lives, and made to suffer many other horrible injustices. The following scriptures speak of this time period.

**Matthew 24:9-11 KJV Paraphrased**

"Then they will deliver you up to affliction, and will kill you; and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, and they will deliver up one another, and will hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness shall have been multiplied, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, that one will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the earth, for a testimony to all the nations; and then shall the end come."
During this time of trouble, Jesus' followers will be persecuted, killed, hated by all peoples, betrayed by their own, make foolish decisions concerning the truth, and forsake God.

**Mark 13:10-19 Paraphrased**

"And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all the nations. But whenever they lead you away, delivering you, do not be anxious beforehand about what you should say or think. But whatever is given to you in that hour, speak that. For you are not those speaking, but the holy spirit. And brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father the child. And children will rise up on parents, and will put them to death. And you will be hated by all on account of my name. But the one enduring to the end, that one will be saved. But when you see the abomination of desolation, the one spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not—he who reads, let him understand—then let those in Judea flee into the mountains. And he who is on the housetop, let him not go down into the house, nor go in to take anything out of his house. And the one in the field, let him not return to the things behind, to take his garment. But woe to those that are with child, and to those giving suck in those days! And pray that your flight will not be in winter. For there will be affliction in those days, such as has not been the like from the beginning of creation which God created until now, and never will be."

Jesus tells those in Judea to be alert to the prophetic events surrounding the false worship system of that day, and to flee for their lives when they see these events transpire.

**Revelation 6:9-11 KJV**

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them; and it was said to them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." See also Rev.12:17.

In all of these references, the elect of God are still on earth, even up to and including the opening of the fifth seal. Notice also that they are to remain for some time after this seal is opened, so that others may also be martyred as a witness for Christ.
Revelation 7:1-4; 13-14 Paraphrased

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel" (vs.1-4 KJV).

"And one of the elders answered, saying to me, These, the ones having been clothed in white robes: who are they, and from where did they come? And I said to him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are those coming out of the great tribulation; and they have washed their robes, and whitened them in the blood of the Lamb" (vs.13-14).

CHRIST TO RETURN TWICE

Throughout the biblical record, there are many references to God coming to earth to reward the saints and establish his government upon the earth in order to bring peace and prosperity to humanity. Most Bible scholars will agree that God says he will indeed come to earth to establish his government. The problem is not with what these references say, it is with the various beliefs of when and how this will happen.

A close review of each reference that details the presentation of rewards given to the elect of God and the establishment of his kingdom upon earth shows two distinct returns of Christ. Christ's first return involves gathering the elect of God for their rewards and change into immortal spirit-beings. During his second return a short time later, he will conquer the earth and establish the Kingdom of God.

Jesus to Come in Clouds

When the high priest Caiaphas asked Jesus to tell him whether or not he was the Messiah, he did not expect the answer he received:

"The high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said to him, You said it. I tell you more. From this time you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of the heavens. Then the high priest tore his garments, saying, he has blasphemed! Why do we have any more need of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard his blasphemy" (Matt.26:63-65 Para.).
Jesus told the high priest that the next time he sees him, he will be on his throne next to the Father, and when he returns, it will be in the clouds.

After Jesus disappeared into the heavens, an angel told the disciples essentially the same thing Jesus told Caiaphas about the events surrounding his return:

"As they looked on, he was taken up; and a cloud received him from their eyes. And as they were looking intently into the heaven, he having gone, even behold, two men in white clothing stood by them, who also said, Men, Galileans, Why do you stand looking up to the heaven? This Jesus, the One being taken from you into heaven, will come in the way you saw him going into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11 Para.). See also Matt.24:30.

**God and Clouds**

Historically and symbolically, when God or a spirit-being came to earth in their glorified form, they appeared in clouds:

"And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud..." (Ex.13:21 KJV). See also Ex.16:10; 19:9;16; 24:16; 34:5.

"And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spoke to him..." (Num. 11:25 KJV).

"And I looked, and behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire enfolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire" (Ezk.1:4 KJV).

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven..." (Dan.7:13 KJV).

"Who lays the beams of his chambers in the waters: who makes the clouds his chariot: who walks upon the wings of the wind" (Psa.104:3 KJV). See also Psa.18:7-15; Rev.1:7;14:14.

As we review some of the events which surround the end of the age and the return of Jesus Christ, we notice that a spirit-being has a tremendous impact on the physical universe when it appears in its glorified form.

**CHRIST RETURNS TO GATHER THE ELECT**

When Jesus enters the earth's atmosphere in his glorified form, the elements will begin to disintegrate under the power of his presence. The air will become supercharged with electricity, and lightning, thunder, and fire, and smoke will fill the sky as his angels collect the elect:

"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt.24:31 KJV). See also Isa.43:5-7; Mk.13:24-27; 14:62; Rev.1:7.
The Elect Rise to Meet Christ

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1.Thes.4:16-17 KJV). See also 2.Thes.2:1-8.

What happens as the righteous of all ages rise to meet Christ in the clouds above the earth?

"Listen I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we will all be changed–in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1.Cor.15:51-52 NIV).

The change to immortality will be a spectacular event. It will be accompanied by the blast of a trumpet, lighting, thunder, and fire in the sky as the elect rise to meet Christ:

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1.Jn.3:2 KJV). See also Rom.6:1-5; Phil.3:21; Rev.1:13-16.

The righteous will be changed to immortal beings just like Jesus. At the instant of this change, the elect will become spirit Sons of God and they will shine with the brightness of the stars:

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan.12:3 KJV).

As the saints rise into the sky, they will be instantly changed into glorified spirit-beings and they will begin to shine with the brightness and power of the stars. At the instant of their change, the very power of their presence will rip apart the atmosphere, dissolving its basic elements. The noise of this awesome event will be almost unbearable to the human ear as sonic booms and explosions, blinding light, thunder, and clouds fill the sky. The sights and sounds of this day will put terror in the hearts of all those who witness it. To many, it will seem as if the world is coming to an end.

Christ and the Elect Disappear

Between the time of Christ's first return to gather the elect and his second return to conquer the earth, Jesus promises to keep the elect from the final portion of the tribulation:
"Because you kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial which is going to come on all the habitable world in order to try those dwelling on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly. Hold what you have that no one take your crown" (Rev.3: 10-11 Para.).

After Christ's first return, the righteous of all ages will be spirit-beings who will have been taken to heaven. When the righteous are changed into spirit-beings and taken to heaven, there will not be one person alive on earth with the spirit of God. Because the elect will no longer be human, they will be protected from God's wrath that will come upon the earth.

CHRIST RETURNS TO CONQUER AND RULE

The Tribulation Cut Short

All of the righteous will have been taken from the earth and only the unrighteous will remain, but what will stop God from destroying the earth and the rest of humanity?

"For there will be great affliction, such as has not happened from the beginning of the world until now; no, nor ever will be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the elect, those days will be shortened" (Matt.24: 21-22 Para.).

Jesus says it is for the elect's sake that all of humanity will not be destroyed. But why? God will not destroy the entire earth because of his promises to the patriarchs and the elect concerning their inheritance, descendants and rulership, and because of his future plans for the rest of humanity.

Jesus Comes to Conquer

After the final plagues are poured out upon the earth, Jesus will return with the Elect of God to conquer the beast power and establish the Kingdom of God:

"Now you prophesy against them all these words, and say to them, the Lord shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar over his dwelling place. He answers with a shout, like those who tread out the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A roaring will go to the ends of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with the nations. He will enter into judgment with all flesh; he will give the wicked to the sword, declares the Lord" (Jer.25:30-31 Para.). See also Isa.43:5-7; Mal.3: 2-3; 4:1; Am.9:1-4; Obad. vs.15-16.
"And I saw the heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God" (Rev.19:11-13 KJV).

The Elect Return With Christ

During the time period between Christ's first and second return, his armies will be preparing to invade and conquer the earth:

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev.19:14-15 KJV). See also Rev.2:26-27; 3:4; 19:8.

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints [the elect]. To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 14-15 KJV).

"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they [the elect] that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev.17:14 KJV).

When Christ returns as the conquering king, the elect of God will come with him as a part of his vast spirit army:

"And to you, who are troubled, rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, that will take full vengeance on those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, these will pay the penalty of everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his strength, when he comes to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired by all those who believe in that Day, because of our testimony" (2.Thes.1:7-10 Para.).

Christ's Rule Begins

"And his feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east: and the Mount of Olives shall divide from its middle, from the east to the west, a very great valley. And half of the mountain shall move toward the North, and half toward the South (v4) . . . And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with you" (Zech.14:4-5 Para.). See also Hag.2:6-7.
His Rule to Last Forever

"And the seventh angel trumpeted. And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world became our Lord's, even of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15 Para.).

This is the time spoken of from the beginning of humanity when salvation will begin to come to all of humanity through the Kingdom of God:

"For a Child is born; to us a Son is given; and the government is on his shoulder; and his name is called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. There is no end to the increase of his government and of peace on the throne of David, and on his kingdom, to order it, and to sustain it with justice and with righteousness, from now and forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this" (Isa. 9:6-7 Para.) See Lk. 1:32-33.

By B.L. Cocherell
Many are puzzled over the prophecies concerning the descendants of
national Israel being collected and brought to the land of ancient Israel.
Some feel that these prophecies are simply analogies. Others believe that
these prophecies will have a literal fulfillment; although, they may not
know when and why the descendants of Israel will be gathered.

After Christ's return and the Battle of Armageddon, the modern
descendants of ancient Israel who are still alive will be gathered from
among the nations of the world where God has scattered them. These
Israelites will be brought to a place called the Wilderness where Jesus
Christ will separate the rebellious from the obedient prior to taking them
to the land of their inheritance and establishing them as a new nation.

In order to understand the prophecies concerning the gathering of the
tribes of Israel, one must first understand how this gathering relates to the
time of God's wrath upon humanity and why God wants to establish a
new nation of Israel under his care and protection.

The Covenant People

The Creator God brought the Israelites out of Egypt because he had a
job for them to do and a purpose for their existence as a nation. These
people were called to be a nation of priests who would represent God and
his plan for the salvation of humanity. Moreover, the Israelites were
chosen to be a righteous example of God's way of life which other people
could follow in order to obtain salvation and eternal life in the Family
and Kingdom of God.

After Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, the
descendants of Israel will be brought into the land of their inheritance
where they will be formed into a world power in order to fulfill their
national destiny.

During this future age, the nation of Israel will again assume its
responsibility as an example to the world of God's way of life. The city of
Jerusalem will again become the focal point for the worship of God, and
Jesus Christ will administer his and his Father's government and religion
to the nations of the world while offering the opportunity of salvation
to the world. See Deut.30:1-6; Mic.4:1-7; Joel 3:16-21; Zech.8:1-3.
With the return of Christ, much of the literal, prophetic, and symbolic meaning of the sacrificial system, the commanded observances, and the holy convocations contained in Israel's first covenant with God will have been fulfilled. However, the prophecies clearly show that, under the new agreement with national Israel, there will be a sacrificial system of worship along with commanded observances and festivals, which also existed under the first agreement with national Israel.

**GOD REMEMBERS HIS PROMISES**

Although national Israel disobeyed God and did not fulfill the purpose for which they had been freed from the bondage and slavery of Egypt, he has no intention of casting them away and beginning with another people. Keep in mind that centuries before Israel became a nation God made unconditional promises to the Patriarchs, and many of these promises included their Israelitish descendants:

"That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed my voice" (Gen.22:17-18 Para.).

The promises to Abraham assured him multitudes of descendants and that, through these descendants, all the inhabitants of the earth would be blessed.

Although the peoples of national Israel failed to live up to their agreement with God, they still have an opportunity for national greatness and salvation. Because of God's unconditional promises to the Patriarchs, he will continue to work with the nation of Israel until his purpose for humanity is realized (See 2.Chr.6:14; Psa.89:34; Zech.2:10-12):

"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be his own treasure out of all the people on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love on you or choose you because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all peoples. But because the Lord loved you, and because he kept the oath which he swore to your fathers, the Lord has caused you to go out with a strong hand, and redeemed you from the house of slaves, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Because of this, know that the Lord your God, he is God, the faithful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to those who love him, and to those who keep his commands, to a thousand generations" (Deut.7:6-9 Para.).

"O Lord God of Israel, there is no God like you in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keeps covenant, and shows mercy to your servants, that walk before you with all their hearts" (2.Chr.6:14 Para.).

"He will ever be mindful of his covenant" (Psa.111:5 Para.).
A New Agreement Promised

Because national Israel had great difficulty obeying God and broke their initial agreement, which they had made with him at Mount Sinai, God promised that he would someday make a new agreement with them, and that this new agreement would be much easier for them to keep because it would have much better terms and conditions.

"Behold the day comes, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant of mine they broke, although I was a husband to them, says the Lord" (Jer.31:31-32 Para).

Because ancient Israel of the original covenant is not a nation today, and her descendants are scattered throughout the nations of the earth, which was prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah, when and with whom will God establish this new contract?

"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, declares the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer.31:33 Para.). See also Ezk.16:59-62.

Notice that the new contract will be made after those days. The phrase after those days refers to the time after God's wrath is poured out on humanity at the end of this age, and after Christ returns as conquering King. Therefore, this new contract will be made with a new nation of Israel.

Some Relevant Biblical Facts

The following are some facts that will shed light on God's new agreement with national Israel.

1. With the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., all laws practiced through the Levitical Priesthood and the sacrificial system were suspended.
2. Many scriptures show that after Christ returns, all peoples of the earth will eventually come under the rule of the government of God.
3. The prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah clearly show that a temple worship system with a priesthood and animal sacrifices will exist during Christ's rule on earth. See Ezk.chps.40-46; Zech.14:16-20.
4. During the rule of Christ, the temple system will be officiated by the male descendants of Zadok who is descended from Eleazar, Aaron's third son.
5. The sacrifices will be performed similarly to the way they were performed under the first agreement with Israel.
6. The commanded observances and holy convocations will be observed, but they will be significantly changed to fit the people, times, and circumstances of the new agreement with national Israel and the rest of humanity.

7. The new agreement with national Israel is not made only with Israelites although there are specific areas of the agreement that only apply to them. The new agreement also contains promises which apply to all of humanity as the plan of God progresses through the centuries toward its ultimate completion.

Although the Bible gives few details regarding the new system of worship which will be performed at the new temple in Jerusalem, it does document the fact that the laws, precepts, and principles that God has ordained for the purpose of worshiping him and regulating human behavior will still be in effect during Christ's rule.

All Israel to be Saved

There is no doubt that God has promised to again offer salvation to Israelites on a national and individual basis and to make a new agreement with them. It is also clear from scripture that the first agreement with national Israel has been canceled, and that Jesus Christ has initiated the process whereby a new agreement will be formed with them:

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Israel): For this is my covenant to them (Israel), when I shall take away their sins" (Rom.11:26-27 KJV). See also Isa.30:15.

The first agreement that God made with national Israel at Mount Sinai was canceled on the Passover in 30 A.D. with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The events surrounding this Passover and the death and resurrection of the Redeemer of humanity ratified a new agreement with Israel and the rest of humanity. In this same year, on the Festival of Pentecost, many of the various terms, conditions, and promises of the new agreement went into effect for all those called to salvation during the gospel age.

"By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear" (Heb.8:13 NIV).

A united national Israel containing all of its various tribes does not exist today, so when will salvation be offered and when will this new agreement be formalized? Ezekiel said that the new agreement with national Israel will be ratified after the return of Christ.

The New Agreement

The prophet Ezekiel speaks of a future time when all of the tribes of Israel will be gathered out of the nations and the wicked will be purged from among them:
"And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and you shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezk.20:38 KJV).

"As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land..." (Ezk.34:12-13 KJV).

A formal presentation and ratification of the new agreement with national Israel cannot be made until they are again a nation. Therefore, it seems that this will happen some time shortly after the return of Jesus Christ and the gathering of national Israel.

A Nation Born in One Day

The prophet Isaiah records that God intends to establish a new nation of Israel after the return of Christ.

"Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? says the Lord; Shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? says your God" (Isa.66:8-9 Para.).

National Israel Will be Restored

"For, lo, the days come, says the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, says the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it" (Jer.30:3 KJV). See also Jer.12:15; 16:14-15; 23:1-8.

God promises to remove the House of Israel and Judah from captivity and return them to the land of their inheritance. Throughout the centuries, the descendants of ancient Israel have been captive to various nations and some will become captives in the end of the age; however, the captivity in verse three primarily pertains to being captive to sin and the Babylonian governmental and religious system.

The Land of Inheritance

The land promised to Abraham's Israelitish descendants lies between the Nile and Euphrates rivers. A very conservative estimate of this geographical area would be well over a million square miles of territory. See Gen.13:14-17; 15:18; Ex.23:31; Deut.11:24; Ezk.ch.47;48. This is the land that the Israelites will be given after Christ returns as conquering King, and after he has established Jerusalem as the headquarters of his Father's government on earth.
"And these are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace" (Jer.30:4-5 KJV).

Here, we see a time of great trouble that will come upon the nations of Israel and Judah in the end of this age. This trouble is analogous to birth pains (Isa.66:8-9). During this time of trouble, scattered Israelites will be prepared to be born as a new nation with a new governmental and religious system.

"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer.30:7 KJV).

Notice that all of these painful things that will happen to Israel (the scattered tribes of Israel) and Judah (the Israelis) are defined as Jacob's trouble (Jacob's descendants—all the tribes of Israel), and that Jacob's descendants will not be completely destroyed during this time.

"For it will come to pass in that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds, and strangers will no more serve themselves of him. . .. Therefore fear you not, O my servant Jacob, says the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob will return, and will be in rest, and be quiet, and none will make him afraid. For I am with you, says the Lord, to save you: though I make a full end of all nations wherever I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you: but I will correct you in measure and will not leave you altogether unpunished. For this says the Lord, Your bruise is incurable, and your wound is grievous. There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up: you have no healing medicines" (Jer.30:8,10-13 KJV).

Clearly the time when Israel and Judah are released from the evil bonds that have held them captive for so many centuries will be after Christ returns, because it is only then that the resurrected king David will again be the king over national Israel. See Ezk.34:23-24; 37:22-25.

God tells the descendants of Jacob not to fear because he will not completely destroy them, but he will save them. However, they are sick with an incurable wound that must be healed by removal. The wound that they have is a spiritual sickness; therefore, God is going to administer the cure in the form of punishment. Some will survive this cure and some will not, because God only administers the cure, it is up to each individual to make the proper use of it through repentance:

"All your lovers have forgotten you; they seek you not; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquity; because your sins were increased. Why cry you for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable for the multitude of your iniquity; because your sins were increased, I have done these things to you" (Jer.30:14-15 KJV).
"Therefore all they that devour you will be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, will go into captivity; and they that spoil you will be spoiled, and all that prey upon you will I give for a prey. For I will restore health to you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord; because they called you an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after. This says the Lord; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city will be built upon her own heap, and the palace will remain after the manner thereof. And out of them will proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they will not be few: I will also glorify them, and they will not be small" (Jer.30:16-19 KJV).

"Their children also will be as before, and their congregation will be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. And their nobles will be of themselves, and their governor will proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he will approach unto me; for who is this that engaged his heart to approach to me? says the Lord. And you will be my people, and I will be your God. Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it will fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord will not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days you will consider it" (Jer.30:20-24 KJV).

There is no doubt that these scriptures speak of the end of the age and the return of the descendants of Jacob to the land of their ancestors. Jeremiah 31:1-10 continues God's prophetic promise to gather the descendants of Jacob and restore Israel to national greatness under his care and protection:

"At the same time, says the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people. This says the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him rest. The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you. Again I will build you, and you will be built, O virgin of Israel: you will again be adorned with your taborets, and will go forth in the dances of them that make merry. You will yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters will plant, and will eat them as common things. For there will be a day, that the watchman upon the mount Ephraim will cry, Arise you and let us go up to Zion to the Lord our God. For this says the Lord; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish you, praise you, and say, O Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travail with child together: a great company will return here. They will come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a
straight way, wherein they will not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. Hear the word of the Lord, O you nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock" (Jer.31:1-10 KJV).

Into the Wilderness

"So I am going to take her into the desert again; there I will win her back with words of love. I will give back to her the vineyards she had and make Trouble Valley a door of hope. She will respond to me there as she did when she was young, when she came from Egypt. Then once again she will call me her husband—she will no longer call me her Baal. I will never let her speak the name of Baal again. At that time I will make a covenant with all the wild animals and birds, so that they will not harm my people. I will also remove all weapons of war from the land, all swords and bows, and will let my people live in peace and safety. Israel, I will make you my wife; I will be true and faithful; I will show you constant love and mercy and make you mine forever. I will keep my promise and make you mine, and you will acknowledge me as Lord. At that time I will answer the prayers of my people Israel. I will make rain fall on the earth, and the earth will produce grain and grapes and olives. I will establish my people in the land and make them prosper. I will show love to those who were called "Unloved," and to those who were called "Not-My-People" I will say, "You are my people," and they will answer, "You are our God" (Hos.2:14-23 GNB).

Gathering Israel

"As I live, says the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries in which you are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out" (Ezk.20:33-34 KJV). See also Isa.27:12.

God says that he is going to bring Israel out of the countries where they are scattered with great power and fury. The fury that is spoken of here refers to God's wrath that is poured out upon Israel and the rest of humanity just before Christ returns as conquering King.

A Time of Judgement

"And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face. Like as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, says the Lord God" (Ezk.20:35-36 KJV).
The Israelites who survive God's wrath will be brought into a wilderness just as their ancestors were brought out of Egypt into the wilderness. And just as with their ancestors, God will also teach them his ways. Only this time, he will not teach with symbolism and difficult concepts. This time, he will teach them in very clear language in order to reveal who he and his Father are, what their plan for humanity is, and what national Israel's part in this plan will be. With this information firmly established, Jesus Christ will begin the process of sorting the Israelites into two categories: those who want to come under God's rule and those who do not.

"And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezk.20:37-38 KJV).

Remember that the ancient Israelites were taught what God expected of them before being allowed to enter the promised land, and that the rebels among them influenced others to rebel against God, which caused a forty year punishment and a delay in entering the promised land. This time it will be different; in that, the rebels will be removed more quickly from among these Israelites.

Although we are not told how long this process of separation will take, we are told that each individual will be dealt with on a personal level: "And I will cause you to pass under the rod" (Ezk.20:37 KJV).

What is perfectly clear is that all who enter into the promised land under the new covenant will be in harmony with God the Father and Jesus Christ—no rebel will enter into the promised land and become a part of the new nation of Israel.

After the Punishment

The Prophet Jeremiah also foretold a time when the descendants of Israel will be gathered out from among the nations after the wrath of God has been poured out upon the earth and the Babylonian system of government under which they lived for centuries:

"In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten" (Jer.50:4-5 KJV).

Here, we see the tribes of the Houses of Judah and Israel united into one nation as they were before the death of King Solomon. These combined tribes will again seek to learn God's ways and will establish a national agreement with him that will withstand the test of time.
"And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon Mount Ephraim and Gilead. In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve" (Jer.50:19-20 KJV).

Here, we see a repentant people, who have been washed of their sins and desire to follow the ways of God, being brought into the land of their ancient ancestors.

**Washed Clean**

God the Father will wash away all these people's sins. How will he do this? He will do this the same way that he cleanses his elect after the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ. Through their repentance and acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and their subsequent baptism, they will be made clean and stand as righteous individuals before God:

"In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and splendid! for those who are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he who is left in Zion, and he who remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from its midst by the spirit of justice, and by the spirit of burning" (Isa.4:2-4 KJV).

"For I will take you from among the heathen nations [i.e., any who worship a false god], and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Ezk.36:24-28 KJV).

**Few Will Survive**

"And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, says the Lord, two parts in it shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will test them as gold is tested: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech.13:8-9 Pàra.) See also Ezek.5:12.
Relatively few Israelites will survive God's wrath to live in the time of the gathering of Israel. Some of those who do survive will be judged unworthy to be a part of the new nation of Israel because of their rebellious attitude and refusal to repent of their evil ways.

The population of the tribes of Israel will be greatly reduced from the hundreds of millions that live in the end of the age. Perhaps only a tenth of their original number will survive because of their refusal to repent and worship the God of their ancestors.

A Warning

"For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities" (Rev.18:3-5 KJV).

"And it will come to pass, that whosoever will call on the name of the Lord will be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, and in the remnant whom the Lord will call" (Joel 2:33 KJV).

"And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:19-21 KJV). See also Rom.10:13.

When God begins to pour out his wrath upon the Babylonian governmental and religious system that will control this earth in the end of the age, the people of Israel will have been warned of the things to come and how to survive the seven trumpet plagues. Any person who calls on the name of the Lord as the remaining plagues are being poured out will be protected and spared from physical death, just as those of ancient Israel were protected from the last plagues upon ancient Egypt.

As a result of the seven trumpet plagues, the earth and its population will be devastated and in a state of utter chaos. Those who survive will have come out of the most horrible and terrifying period of human history. They will be frightened, confused, apprehensive, and in need of food, clothing, and shelter. It is into this world of confusion that Christ sends his angelic host to gather the people of Israel from among the nations where they were scattered centuries ago. The angels will bring these Israelites into the wilderness to be judged either worthy or unworthy to enter the land of their ancestors.
Into the Land of Inheritance

After the gathering of Israel into the wilderness, the removal of the rebellious individuals, and the formal presentation of the new covenant, the Israelites will be brought into the land of their inheritance. This is where they will begin to fulfill their national destiny under the care and protection of Jesus Christ who will rule the entire earth from Jerusalem:

"Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, wherever I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they will be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they will not depart from me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. For this says the Lord: Like as I have brought all this great evil on this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them" (Jer.32:37-42 KJV).

"And it will come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and you will be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. For this says the Lord of hosts: As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, says the Lord of hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days to do well to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear you not. These are the things that you will do; Speak you every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, says the Lord. And the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, This says the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, will be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace. Thus says the Lord of hosts: It will yet come to pass, that there will come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city will go to another, saying Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yes, many people and strong nations will come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. This says the Lord of hosts: In those days it will come to pass, that ten men will take hold out of all languages of the nations, even will take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew saying. We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech.8:13-23 KJV).
SUMMARY

After Christ's return to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth, the descendants of Israel will be brought to the land of their inheritance. There they will be formed into a world power in order to fulfill their national destiny.

During this future age, the nation of Israel will again assume its responsibility as an example to the world of God's way of life. The city of Jerusalem will again become the focal point for the worship of God, and Jesus Christ will administer his and his Father's government and religion, while offering the opportunity of salvation to the nations of the world. See Deut.30:1-6; Mic.4:1-7; Joel 3:16-21; Zech.8:1-3,13.

"That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed my voice" (Gen.22:17-18 Para.).

By B.L. Cocherell
One of the major events that will take place 3½ years before the return of Christ is the halting of the sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem and the invasion and occupation of Israel by the Antichrist/Beast's alliance of nations and Israel's Islamic neighbors. Anyone who is unfortunate enough to be in Israel when it is invaded and occupied will experience one of the most horrible and terrifying times in human history.

The Warning Signs

There are a number of warning signs that will be given to those living in the nation of Israel before this invasion. The first of these signs is the proclaiming of God the Father's good news message by the elect of God who are scattered throughout the world, the high priest of the temple system in Jerusalem, and another person who is likely to be a high ranking government official of Israel. This message will include the proclamation that the Kingdom of God will soon be established on earth:

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt.24:14 KJV).

"And I will give to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two lamp-stands [candlesticks] before the God of the earth [See Zech.3:1-10]. And if anyone desires to harm them, fire comes out of their mouth and devours their enemies: and if any one desires to harm them, so it is right for him to be killed. These have the authority to shut up the heaven, that no rain may rain in the days of their prophecy [3½ years]: and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire" (Rev.11:3-6 Para.).

These preliminary signs foretell the coming invasion and occupation of Israel will probably occur about 1-2 years before the last two major signs, which occur within a very short time frame and will give those who are watching a very short time to escape Jerusalem and Israel.

Two Obvious Signs to Flee

About 3½ years before the return of Christ, the Jews and the elect of God who are in the nation of Israel will be given two very clear signs that the invasion and occupation of Israel is imminent. Upon recognizing either of these warning signs, a person should immediately stop what they are doing and flee for their lives if they want to survive and escape captivity.
The First Warning Sign

"And when you shall see Jerusalem being encircled by armies, then know that its destruction is near. Let those in Judea flee to the mountains; and those in the midst of it, let them go out. And those who are out of town do not go into Jerusalem. For these are the days of vengeance when all things that have been written are to be fulfilled. But woe to the pregnant women, and those breast-feeding children in those days! for great distress will be on the earth and wrath on his people" (Lk.21:20-23 Para.).

The Armies

The reason that armies will surround Jerusalem is that an agreement will be made between the Beast alliance of nations and the Israelis to guarantee their protection. After this agreement is made, there will be peace and prosperity in the Middle East for a short time while the Beast alliance negotiates with Israel and her neighbors to calm the volatile political situation that exists among them.

This period of peace will allow the Jews to build a temple in order to worship their God in Jerusalem. When this temple is completed, the Jews will institute the Levitical Priesthood and the sacrificial system at this temple. When this happens, the political scene will take a dramatic turn for the worse. By instituting the Levitical Priesthood and animal sacrifices, the Jews will be unwittingly implying that the god of their Islamic neighbors is a false god and that the Jews are worshiping the only true God; therefore, Israel's neighbors will become very hostile toward her and will again openly seek to destroy her.

Israel's Islamic Neighbors

The prophecy in Daniel 11: 40-45 reveals that the nations to the north and south of Israel will stir up trouble by threatening to break their agreement of peace with Israel. Then, the king of the north who is the Antichrist/Beast and his alliance of nations will move against Egypt in order to honor its agreement to guarantee the peace. Egypt will be crushed along with several other Islamic nations in that geographical area. However, the prophecy specifically says that the ancient nations of Amon and Moab (the Jordanians) escape. As prophecy shows, these people are going to offer protection to the Jews that flee from Jerusalem and Israel. See Isa.16:1-5.

Jerusalem Surrounded

While the army of the Antichrist/Beast is busy crushing the Arabs in Egypt and in North Africa, the Islamic nations to the north and east (Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, etc.) will begin indicating that they are also about to break their peace agreement with Israel. When this happens, the Beast alliance of nations will send its army to Israel and Jerusalem under the pretense of protecting Israel from an invasion. The Israelis will welcome the protection of their allies' powerful army and they will feel secure from their neighbors' threat of invasion. However, the intentions of the
Beast are more sinister; it intends to invade and destroy Israel and remove her as an obstacle to their plan for world domination.

The Second Warning Sign

"When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (let the reader understand;) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes" (Matt.24:15-18 KJV).

"But when you see the abomination of desolation, the one spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand) then let those in Judea flee to the mountains: And he that is on the housetop, do not go down into his house and take anything out of it. And one in the field, do not return to get anything, not even a piece of clothing. But woe to the pregnant woman, and those with babies! Pray that this flight is not in the winter. For there will be affliction in these days, such as has not been since the beginning of creation, and never again will be" (Mk.13:14-21 Para.). See also Dan.11:31; 12:11.

What is the Abomination of Desolation?

Because of the things that took place during past desecrations of the Jerusalem temple, many people are looking for the abomination of desolation to be something, such as the sacrifice of an unclean animal on the holy altar, which was done by Antiochus Epiphanes, or the placing of the statue of the Olympian Zeus in the temple. It is important to understand that all of these past desecrations of the temple happened after Jerusalem was invaded and conquered. However, the prophecies concerning the future desecration of the temple clearly show that the abomination of desolation that will pollute the holy place will happen before an invasion and occupation of Jerusalem.

Once the temple is dedicated, there is no way that the Levitical Priesthood will allow anyone or anything to enter it that is not specifically authorized by the book of the law. Anyone attempting to do this will bring about a major confrontation between themselves, the guards of the temple, the worshipers, and the priesthood.

In his second letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul answers the question concerning what the future abomination of desolation will be:

"Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, because that day will not come, unless there first comes a falling away [departure from the faith], and the man of sin is revealed, who is the son of perdition. This is the one who opposes and exalts himself over everything being called God, or object of worship, and he is to sit in the temple of God, as God; in order to show that he is a god" (2.Thess.3-4 Para).
The son of perdition is the Antichrist/Beast and leader of the alliance of nations called the Beast, and he will desecrate the temple; he is the abomination that makes desolate. This powerful spirit-being masquerading as a human will, in his arrogance, desecrate the temple of the true God in Jerusalem by entering into it and sitting there in defiance of the true God. He will do this in order to attempt to prove to the world that he is indeed a god, and that the true God is no god.

This leader of the Beast alliance of nations will be the guarantor of the peace between Israel and her neighbors. When he surrounds Jerusalem with his armies, he may agree to put his life on the line for this agreement by entering into the temple area as a sign of his commitment. Ultimately, this will lead to his desecration of the holy place by entering into it as foretold by Jesus Christ, Daniel, and the apostle Paul.

**SUMMARY**

It is easy to understand why the Israelis will view the armies of their allies that surround Jerusalem as a protective force. There will likely be mass media coverage as the Beast's armies encircle Jerusalem, along with televised interviews with the dynamic, powerful, and charismatic leader of the Beast alliance of nations as he comes to Jerusalem under the pretense of protecting Israel. It is also likely that his entrance into the temple in Jerusalem will be televised, because this event will cause a major confrontation between those who worship at the temple and the priesthood and the Antichrist/Beast leader.

Both of the warnings concerning the armies that surround Jerusalem and the desecration of the temple are extremely serious, because these two events are the prelude to the attack and brutal captivity that will come upon the Jews for the last 3½ years before Jesus Christ's return.

The instant one hears the news of either one of these events and understands what it means, they should immediately stop what they are doing and flee Jerusalem and Israel as quickly as possible, because there will be very little time in which to escape. There will be no time to collect one's belongings or warn others. Every second of delay will place one's life in extreme jeopardy. From what is said in the scriptural warnings, it is very clear that the window of opportunity for escape may be measured in minutes, perhaps less than an hour.

Those whom God has called to salvation and any of the Jews who understand the ancient prophecies concerning these two warnings should make sure that their attitudes and behaviors are correct before God and they should be well prepared to leave Jerusalem and Israel on a moments notice when the prophetic armies surround Jerusalem and the abomination that makes desolate sits where it should not sit.

By B.L. Cocherell and Charles E. Barrett
Key End of the Age Events Related to the Warning Signs to Flee Jerusalem

Last 7 Years
Satan gives edict to spirit rulers of nations to dominate world and thwart God's plan for the salvation of humanity (Dan. 9:27).

- Temple completed for the worship of the Creator God in Jerusalem.
- Two Witnesses begin their ministry (Rev. 11:3-6).
- Beast alliance of nations crush Egypt and other Islamic nations (Dan. 11:40-45).
- Jerusalem surrounded by Beast armies (Lk. 21:20-23), Abomination of Desolation is in the Holy Place (Matt. 24:15-18), Sacrifices at the Temple are stopped (Dan. 9:27), Beast armies attack Jerusalem and Israel (Lk. 21:20, 24).
- First Resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6).
- Jesus Christ returns as King of Kings (Rev. 19:11-21).

Winter Season
- Approximately 4 months
- 3½ Years

Fall Season Spring Season Fall Season
## End of The Age Events Harmonized

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 24</th>
<th>Mark 13</th>
<th>Luke 21</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vs. 1-2 Jesus Christ predicts temple to be destroyed.</td>
<td>Vs. 1-2</td>
<td>Vs. 5-6</td>
<td>Fulfilled 70 A.D.</td>
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<td>V. 3 Disciples ask what are the signs of the end of the age and Jesus Christ's return.</td>
<td>Vs. 3-4</td>
<td>V. 7</td>
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<td>Vs. 4-5 Take heed to not be deceived, many come in my name saying I am Christ and deceive many.</td>
<td>Vs. 4-5</td>
<td>V. 8</td>
<td>Seems to apply to all ages of the elect and the world up to and including the end of the age.</td>
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<td>V. 6 Wars and rumors of wars</td>
<td>V. 7</td>
<td>V. 9</td>
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<td>Vs. 7-8 Nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom, earthquakes in various places places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.</td>
<td>V. 8</td>
<td>Vs. 10-11 Fearful sights and great signs from heaven.</td>
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<td>V. 9 Then they shall deliver you to be afflicted and kill you and you will be hated of all nations for my name's sake.</td>
<td>V. 9 They shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues you shall be beaten: and you shall be brought before rulers and kings for my name's sake, for a testimony against them.</td>
<td>Jews persecute elect up to time Jerusalem and Israel are conquered.</td>
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<td>V. 10 Then shall many be offended and betray one another and hate one another.</td>
<td>V. 12 Family members betray one another and cause to be put to death.</td>
<td>V. 16 You shall be betrayed by kinsfolk and friends and they will cause some to be put to death.</td>
<td>Seems to apply to elect, especially to Jews betraying other Jews and priests who are converted.</td>
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<td>V. 10 Gospel must first be proclaimed among all nations.</td>
<td>V. 11 When delivered up take no thought how to answer, the holy spirit will give you it in that hour.</td>
<td>Vs. 12-15 Deliver you to synagogues and prisons and be brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. Don't meditate how to answer, I will give you wisdom which enemies can't gainsay nor resist.</td>
<td>Parenthetical expression; correct chronological position is between Mk. 13:13-14.</td>
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<td>V. 11 Many false prophets arise and deceive many</td>
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<td>After Jerusalem church starts with signs and wonders, Satan will empower more false prophets to deceive people.</td>
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<td>V. 12 Because iniquity abounds the love of many grows cold.</td>
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<td>Seems to describe the end of of the age overall.</td>
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<td>V. 13 He that endures to the end shall be saved.</td>
<td>V. 13 You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake but he that endures to end shall be saved.</td>
<td>Vs. 17-19 You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head perish. In your patience possess you your souls.</td>
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<td>V. 14 This gospel of the Kingdom to be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations and then shall the end come.</td>
<td>V. 10 fits here chronologically.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This begins about 4½ years before Christ's return.</td>
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<td>Vs. 15-20 when you see the abomination of desolation in the holy place, those in Judea flee, don't go back for anything, pray flight not in winter or on Sabbath.</td>
<td>Vs. 14-18</td>
<td>Vs. 20-21 When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know its desolation is near. Those in Judea flee and depart; those in country do not enter in.</td>
<td>3½ years before Christ's return.</td>
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<td>Vs. 22-24 These are the days of vengeance to fulfill what is written. Woe to them with child—for shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon his people. They shall fall by the sword and be led captive into all nations and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by gentiles until times of gentiles be fulfilled.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This describes two separate prophecies. One about the Jewish nation of Israel at the the very end of this age just prior to Christ's return and one about the invasion and occupation of Jerusalem through the centuries by foreigners.</td>
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<td>Vs. 21-22 Then shall be Great Tribulation such as was not since world began nor ever shall be. Except those days be shortened, no flesh could be saved but for elect's sakes, those days shall be shortened.</td>
<td>Vs. 19-20</td>
<td>Applies to Mt.24:21-22 and Mk. 13:19-20; 7th seal = Day of the Lord; 7 trumpet plagues, 7th = 7 last plagues.</td>
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<td>Vs. 23-26 If any say Jesus Christ is here, don't believe it. For false Christs and false prophets shall arise and show great signs and wonders such if possible, to deceive the very elect. If they say Jesus Christ is in a secret place, don't believe it.</td>
<td>Vs. 21-23</td>
<td></td>
<td>Beast and False Prophet increase in power and activity</td>
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<td>Vs. 27-28 As lighting comes out of east to west, so shall the coming of Jesus Christ be. For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.</td>
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<td>Vs. 29-31 Immediately after the tribulation shall heavenly bodies be shaken and then appear sign of Jesus Christ in heaven and then tribes of earth mourn and see Jesus Christ coming in clouds with power and great glory. And he sends angels with trumpet to gather elect from 4 winds from one end of heaven to the other.</td>
<td>Vs. 24-27 From uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.</td>
<td>Vs. 25-28 Men's hearts failing for fear for looking at these things coming to earth. When these things come to pass, then look up and lift your heads for your redemption draws near.</td>
<td>Rev. 11:15-19, 15:1 Immediately after tribulation has to refer to first 6 Trumpet Plagues culminating in 1st Resurrection of the elect.</td>
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<td>Vs. 32-35 Parable of fig tree... Know summer is near. Likewise when you see all these things know it is near even at the door. This generation shall not pass till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth may pass away but my words shall not pass away.</td>
<td>Vs. 28-31</td>
<td>Vs. 29-33...when you see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is near at hand.</td>
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<td>V. 36 But of that day and hour knows no man, nor angels, but my Father only.</td>
<td>V. 32</td>
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<td>Vs. 37-51 As in the days of Noah...two in field, one taken, one left...watch...for you know not what hour Lord comes. Be a doer...don't say Lord delays his coming and be cut asunder.</td>
<td>Vs. 33-37 Watch and pray for you don't know when the time is...watch therefore for you know not when the master comes...lest he come and find you sleeping. Watch!</td>
<td>Vs. 34-36 Take heed to not be...overcharged with cares of this life and that day come on you unawares...Watch and pray always to be counted worthy to escape all these things and stand before Jesus Christ.</td>
<td>Reference is to 1st resurrection and need for elect to be ready and doing. Seems to apply to elect of the Philadelphia grouping being spared from hour of temptation which may refer to the mark of the Beast or tribulation or both (Rev.3:10).</td>
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CHAPTER
TWENTY-THREE
SATAN'S DEATH

There are several prophecies about the impending punishment of Satan and other evil spirits. These prophecies point to one climactic event far into the future during which Satan will be terminated. This biblical study reveals both why and when Satan will cease to exist in any dimension of God's vast realm.

THE SOVEREIGN GOD

One of the first things to understand is that there is a vast difference between eternal life and immortal life. Before one can begin to understand the subject of eternal life and immortality, one must understand who controls eternity and immortality and what constitutes being eternal and immortal.

In Paul's acknowledgment of the majesty of God, he reveals that the God he refers to is the king:

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1.Tim.1:17 KJV).

Here, the English word King is translated from the Greek word baslou, which conveys the sense of one who is the foundation of power (i.e., the sovereign authority).

Paul also says that this sovereign God is eternal, immortal, and invisible, and must be given honor and glory forever. In this verse, the English word eternal is a translation of the Greek word aion, which means ages (i.e., perpetuity or eternal). And the English word immortal is a translation of the Greek word aphthartos, which means will not decay, continuance of life, or ever-living.

The God Paul refers to in this verse is God the Father, the Sovereign God, who has authority and control over all that exists and all that is eternal or immortal.

As Paul continues to instruct Timothy, he says the following:

"I charge you before God [God the Father] who makes all things alive, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good witness for God to Pontius Pilate, that, you keep the commandment, spotless and blameless, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who in his own time will reveal the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; the only One who has immortality; dwelling in the light which no man can approach to; whom no man has seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen" (1.Tim.6:13-16 Para.).
Verses 13 through 16 also show that God the Father is sovereign over all things, including Jesus Christ and the qualities of life defined as eternal and immortal.

Verse 13 reveals that there is a God who has the power to give life to all things, and that this God is someone other than Jesus Christ.

Verses 14 and 15 show that it is Jesus Christ who reveals the Sovereign God who is "the only potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords." Although Jesus Christ is also called the King of kings and Lord of lords, he is never called the only potentate. In these verses, the English word, potentate is a translation from the Greek word dunastes, which means one of great authority.

Jesus was to reveal the one with great authority. And the only being who is greater than Jesus is God the Father. Jesus refers to God the Father as the sovereign over all things in heaven and earth:

"You have heard how I said to you, I go away, and come again to you. If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I said I go to the Father: for my Father is greater than I" (Jn.14:28 KJV).

"And the Father himself, which has sent me, has borne witness of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape" (Jn.5:37 KJV).

In verse 16, Paul also reveals that the Sovereign God (God the Father) who is the only potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords has all authority and control over immortality. The English word, has in verse 16 is a translation of the Greek word eho, which means to hold, to posses, or to own. Moreover, the English word immortality in verse 16 is a translation of the Greek word athanasia, which means deathlessness, never dying, a continuance of life.

No Man has Seen the Sovereign God

"No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him" (Jn.1:18 KJV).

Here, John cannot be referring to the Mighty One of ancient Israel, because men did see, hear, and speak to him face to face; John is speaking of the Sovereign God—God the Father.

It is clear from what Paul says in 1.Timothy 1:17 and 6:13-16 that God the Father not only is eternal and immortal but also has sovereign authority and control over the conditions of existence defined as eternal life and immortality. The following are qualities of the Sovereign God to whom Paul refers:
• He is eternal.
• He is immortal.
• He is invisible.
• He is the only wise God.
• He is able to give life.
• He is the only potentate.
• He is superior to all other kings and lords in heaven and earth.
• He is revealed by Jesus Christ.
• He has absolute authority and control over eternal and immortal life.
• He lives in unapproachable light.
• No person has seen or can see him.

What are Eternal Life and Immortality?

• Eternal life is a continuance of life that is sustained by God the Father and is conditional based on obedience to God and his law.
• Immortality is life that springs forth from itself; it is not dependent on any other source to sustain it because it is self-sustaining.

Who Controls Life and Death?

This study shows that God the Father has reserved to himself the power to destroy spirits-beings as well as humans who violate his principles, precepts, and laws. The following scriptures show beyond a doubt that God the Father has absolute control over life and death:

Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt.10:28 KJV).

Although the Creator God who became Jesus Christ had authority and control over life and death (Deut.32:39-40; 1.Sam.2:6; 2.Kg.5:7), God the Father has absolute control over all life:

"For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father" (Jn.5:21-23 NIV).

The God Who Cast Off Immortality

The apostle John reveals that, as the Creator God, Jesus cast off his immortality in order to become human and experience life and death as a human:
"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. ...He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. ...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth" (Jn.1:1-14 KJV). See also Matthew chapters 1-4.

Despite the many scriptures that speak of Jesus being a member of the God family, many people still feel that he was only a human being who did not pre-exist. John records Jesus telling the Jews of his pre-existence:

"Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham was, I AM. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by" (Jn.8:58-59 KJV).

The reason the Jews tried to kill Jesus is that he said he had existed before Abraham and as the I AM (i.e., God), so they believed he was claiming to be the Creator God of Abraham. The Jews considered Jesus' claim to be blasphemy.

"I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (Jn.16:28; 3:13 KJV).

Here, Jesus says that he came from the Father into the world again. What did Jesus mean by again? If we understand that Jesus was the Creator God (Jn.1:1-12; Heb.1:1-3), this statement is not a mystery. The word again is translated from the Greek word palin, which means once more, repetition, or again. As the Creator and the God of ancient Israel, he came to earth many times. Remember, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and many others talked, ate, and fellow-shipped face to face with the Creator.

Clearly as the Creator God, Jesus had existed before his creation of humanity. Moreover, he set aside his position as second in authority in the God family to become a human being. This is shown in his prayer to the Father before his death and resurrection:

"And now, O Father, glorify you me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was" (Jn.17:5 KJV). See Jn.8:38-59; 17:24.
Jesus, The God Who Died

Despite the fact that there are many scriptures which clearly state that Jesus was totally dead, some still believe the totality of Jesus did not really die. In the first chapter of Revelation, the apostle John records his encounter with Jesus Christ who says he is the God Alpha and Omega (Rev.1:8):

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying to me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that lives, and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev.1:17-18 KJV). See also Rom.6:8-10, Acts 2:24-32; 3:15,26.

The Greek Interlinear Bible translates the phrase was dead, in verse 18, as I became dead. The Greek word used for dead here is corpse. The Alpha and Omega says he was a dead body, but is now alive forever.

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the first and the last: who became dead [was a corpse], and lived" (Rev.2:8 Para.).

Notice again that the Alpha and Omega (the Savior) says that he was totally dead at one time.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb.2:9 KJV).

"Your attitude should be the kind that was shown to us by Jesus Christ, who, though he was God, did not think it was wrong to be as the Sovereign God. Jesus did not cling to his rights as God, but laid aside his power and glory, taking on the form of a man: And humbled himself even further, by allowing himself to unjustly be put to death as a criminal on the cross" (Phil.2:5-8 Para.).

Jesus Christ, the Creator of all things (Jn.1:1-3), was an immortal spirit-being that inherently possessed the highest form of existence: life that springs forth from itself, never dying or decaying. A being who was not subject to death emptied himself of his glory, power, and immortality to become a mortal man. Then, he, allowed his creation to murder him. Not only did this immortal being voluntarily give up his life but also died an agonizing physical death and completely ceased to exist as a living entity for a short time. See Lk.24:1-7.

"Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead" (Gal.1:1 KJV). See also Acts 4:10, 5:30, 10:40; 13:30.
Jesus was completely dead; he ceased to exist. All that remained of him was the spirit and physical records of his existence. Even these could have been completely destroyed and erased, if the Father had willed it (Matt.10:28; Lk.12:4-5). It is important to understand that Jesus would have remained dead forever—never to live again—if his Father had not resurrected him from the dead.

It is also important to understand the enormity of what had taken place during Jesus' life and at his death. During this time, God the Father was the only eternal and immortal being in existence.

**CAN SPIRIT-BEINGS DIE?**

The Bible says that God the Father and Jesus Christ are immortal and the Father controls who is given eternal life and immortality. Presently the only immortal spirit-beings are God the Father and Jesus Christ. Although many people believe that all spirit-beings are immortal because they are composed of spirit, this is not true. As Jesus explained the punishment that will be given those who refuse to live righteously after they are called to salvation, he reveals the punishment reserved for Satan and other evil spirits:

"Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt.25:41 KJV).

Why is a fire prepared for Satan and the evil spirits under his control? It makes no sense to prepare a fire to cast evil spirits into unless they can be harmed by this fire.

**Angelic Beings are Eternal, not Immortal**

Many assume that angels have immortal life and cannot die because of the following statement Jesus made about those accounted worthy of eternal life not being subject to death and being equal to the angels:

"And Jesus answering them said, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, do not marry, nor are given in marriage: Nor can they die any more: for they are equal to the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Lk.20:34-36 Para.).

In verses 34 and 35, Jesus is only answering the Sadducees' question of marital status in the Kingdom of God; he is not addressing the question of eternal life or immortality. He explains that marriage is only for humans and is not necessary in the spirit world. Angels are created beings, which do not procreate as humans do. Likewise, when the children of God are transformed into spirit-beings, they will neither marry nor procreate.
Verse 36 does not say angelic beings are immortal. It just says that the resurrected saints will be in a condition similar to the angels. However, unlike the angels who have eternal life which can be destroyed, people who participate in the first resurrection are given immortal life as sons of God. Because these children of God are immortal, they have life that springs forth from itself which never dies or decays and is not dependent on any other source to sustain it; therefore, they cannot die (1 Tim.1:17, 6:12-16, Heb.2:9; 1 Cor.15:50-56).

Angels are not immortal spirit-beings; they are eternal beings, which have their life sustained by the power of God. Eternal life can be terminated, which is documented by the many scriptures that show the destruction of evil spirits.

**Spirit-Beings Can Die**

Can spiritual beings die? Yes, spirit-beings are subject to death under certain conditions. God the Father has ultimate power and authority over all that he has caused to be created, including evil spirits. However, evil spirits want us to believe that they are immortal beings that will live forever. Nevertheless, they are not immortal; they are only eternal.

While explaining the necessity for a child of God to have faith with works, the apostle James makes an interesting statement about evil spirits and their fear of God:

"What does it profit, my brethren, though a man says he has faith, and has not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute not having daily food, and one of you says to them, depart in peace, be warmed and filled, and does not give them the things which are needful to the body. What does it profit? Therefore, faith, without works, is dead, being alone. Yes, man may say, You have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (Jms.2:14-19 KJV Para.).

What is it that evil spirits know about God that would make them tremble in fear? This question is answered in Mark's account of Jesus meeting a man in a synagogue who was possessed with a demon:

"And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with you, you Jesus of Nazareth? are you come to destroy us? I know you, you are the Holy One of God" (Mk.1:23-24 KJV; Lk.4:33-35).
In verse 24, the English word \textit{destroy} is a translation of the Greek word \textit{appolumi}, which means \textit{to destroy fully, complete destruction, to perish, or to die}. This same word is used many times to describe the utter destruction of individuals and places (Matt.10:28, 12:14, 21:41; Lk.17:29). All of these examples of the word \textit{apollumi} are used to convey utter or complete destruction. Both the Hebrew and the Greek words for \textit{destroy} mean 'the destruction and cessation of existence'.

The question the demon asks is important because it tells us three essential facts about evil spirits:

- Evil spirits know they can be destroyed.
- Some evil spirits know they are going to die for their rebellion.
- Jesus has the power to destroy evil spirits.

\textbf{SATAN'S PUNISHMENT}

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Rev.20:1-3 KJV). See also Isa.24:21-22.

At the beginning of the millennium, this powerful evil being will be bound and held in a prison for a thousand years, after which he will be released for a short time. But what will happen to him after his release? Will he be allowed to continue his existence or will he be destroyed?

"When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev.20:7-10 NIV).

If this translation of verse 10 is taken at face value, it seems to say that Satan will be cast into a lake of fire to be tortured for eternity. But, does the phrase \textit{for ever and ever} mean an eternity in the original Greek language?

\textbf{For Ever and Ever}

The English phrase \textit{for ever and ever} in verse 10 is a gross mistranslation of the original Greek phrase \textit{eis tous aepnas ton aionon}, which means, \textit{to the ages of the ages}. A more correct translation of verse 10 is as follows:
"And the devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet were. And shall be tormented day and night until the age of ages" (v10).

Satan will not endure everlasting punishment; he will have his existence terminated; he will cease to exist forever. The age spoken of in verse 10 is the termination of an age. It is the time when the existence of physical humans on earth will end. Moreover, it is a time when a new age will begin and the mystery of what God is doing here on earth will be revealed.

**Satan Will Die**

After Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit, the Creator God gave a prophecy about the termination of Satan's existence:

"And I will put enmity [separation] between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen.3:15 KJV). The woman's seed is a reference to Christ.

The Hebrew word for bruise, is shoof, which means to crush or strike at. Because Satan is referred to as a serpent, it makes sense that Satan is the serpent that would try to destroy the Savior. Almost all Bible scholars agree that this verse is speaking about the Savior who will come and triumph over Satan. Satan would strike at the heel and damage it a little bit. But, Christ will crush the head of Satan; thereby, he will destroy him.

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" (Rom.16:20 KJV).

The Greek word suntribo translated as bruise in verse 20 means to crush or to completely shatter. In other words, it means 'to destroy'.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb.2:14 KJV). See also 2.Thes.2:8.

In verse 14, the English word destroy is a translation of the Greek word katargeo, which comes from the root argeo, which means to render entirely useless. It can also mean to abolish, to cease, to vanish away, or to utterly destroy. Christ will utterly destroy Satan.

There is nothing in the Greek word katargeo that indicates anything other than destruction; it does not show that Satan will continue to live. Indeed, it indicates he will be utterly destroyed. Verse 14 also shows that Jesus has the power to destroy Satan.
Satan the Lawbreaker

"You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (Jn.8:44 KJV).

Satan and other evil spirits were cast out of the Kingdom of God because of their rebellion (Rev.12:1-9). They are against the law of God and will not conform to it willingly. Moreover, they willfully break the laws of God and obey only what God imposes upon them by force.

A Covering Cherub Will Die

Ezekiel, chapter 28 contains the prophecy about the physical king of Tyre and the destruction of the evil cherub who possessed him.

"Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord God; You seal up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. You have been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of your tabrets and of your pipes was prepared in you in the day that you were created. You are the anointed cherub that covers . . ." (Ezk. 28:12-14 KJV).

Verses 13-14 do not describe the physical King of Tyre; they describe someone completely different. The only kind of being that could fit this description has to be from the spirit realm of existence. These verses show the magnificence and beauty of a powerful spirit-being who was created to hold a powerful position within the Kingdom of God.

"And I have set you so: you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity [lawlessness] was found in you. By the multitude of your merchandise they have filled the midst of you with violence, and you have sinned: therefore I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire" (Ezk.28:14-16 KJV).

The English word destroy in verse 16 is a translation from the Hebrew word abad and is normally translated into English words as destroyed, perished, and to destroy and to perish. As it is used in Ezekiel, chapter 28, the word abad, cannot mean anything other than total destruction. These scriptures prove beyond doubt that this powerful spirit-being will have his life terminated and will cease to exist.
"Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness: I will cast you to the ground, I will lay you before kings, that they may behold you. You have defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of you, it shall devour you, and I will bring you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold you. All they that know you among the people shall be astonished at you: you shall be a terror, and never shall you be any more." (Ezk.28:17-19 KJV).

Note: A more correct translation of the last part of verse 19 is, "You shall never be a terror anymore."

The fire that will come from within this powerful spirit-being will consume him; he will be destroyed and turned to ashes. The judgment and punishment for this spirit-being has already been made—his fate is sealed. He will be destroyed by fire for his rebellion. Remember, the penalty for committing willful sin is death (Rom.6:23).

It is important to understand that the Lake of Fire in which evil spirits and humans will be cast is a physical place that burns with physical fire. Because both evil spirits and people will be destroyed by the same physical fire (Matt.25:40-41; Rev.20:7-10) and turned to physical ashes that will be trodden under the feet of the righteous (Mal.4:1-3), it seems likely that God will change evil spirits into fleshly beings before they are destroyed by this fire.

**IS THERE A FATE WORSE THAN DEATH?**

We have learned that evil spirits can be destroyed; however, is there a fate worse than death reserved for some evil spirits? Notice what some evil spirits asked Jesus:

"When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" Some distance from them a large herd of pigs were feeding. The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs" (Matt.8:28-31 NIV). See also Lk.8:26-33.

What did these demons fear? Did they fear death or something worse than death? They asked Jesus if he had come to torture them before their appointed time. What torture and what time were they referring to? Actually, some of these evil beings will suffer a fate far worse than death.

**Raging Waves and Wandering Stars**

Jude's letter is mainly a warning to the elect about the false brethren who were among them. But it also includes information regarding two types of punishment for evil spirits.
Jude verses 5-7; 13 KJV

"I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day [See 2.Pet.2:4]. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (vs.5-7).

What Jude reminds them of was common knowledge at that time. Verse 6 shows that some of these rebellious angels are chained in a prison of darkness until the day they will be punished by fire. However, in verse 13, Jude makes a statement about a second group of rebellious angels. His statement explains what torture the demons who met Jesus at the tombs were concerned about:

"Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (v13).

The following are translations of words from the original Greek text that show the severity of the punishment noted in Jude, verse 13:

- **Wandering**: [Greek *planetes*: From a root word which means a rover or a planet].
- **Blackness**: [Greek *zophos*: blackness, darkness as shrouding like a cloud].
- **Darkness**: [Greek *skotos*: obscurity, or darkness].

Because there is no reference to the death of these evil spirits, the indication is that this prison of blackness and darkness is a place they will never leave. Moreover, it is probably where they shall be confined to wander alone forever.

For a sentient being, there could be no greater or torturous punishment than to be totally cut off from all other beings and left alone with one's thoughts in total darkness forever. This is the torment that demons fear more than death. Some demons are already experiencing this torture, which is indicated in Jude 6 and 2.Pet.2:4.

**Another Dimension**

There are scriptures that say no evil will be allowed in the new heavens, the new earth, or the Holy City (See 2.Pet.3:10-13; Rev.21:1-27). This seems to contradict the scriptures that say some of the demons will be punished by being left alive in total darkness. However, not allowing any evil presence in the new heavens and earth does not preclude the existence of another dimension of time and space outside of where the God family exists (See 1.Pet.3:18-20; 2.Pet.2:3-5).
The current physical and spiritual realms are an example of two separate dimensions of time and space that exist concurrently; therefore, there is no reason to believe that God cannot design and create as many separate dimensions of time and space as he deems necessary for whatever purpose he desires.

It is obvious from the scriptures that all spirit-beings do not have immortal life. If they did, they could not be destroyed. All spirit-beings besides the Father and those of the New Creation can only possess eternal life as long as they are obedient to the Father. Although the majority of evil spirits will be destroyed in a Lake of Fire (Matt.25:41), some will suffer a fate worse than death for their rebellion against God.

God's prophetic plan for humanity is right on schedule and Satan's death is sure; he will die for his rebellion against the Sovereign Father. The fulfillment of prophecies concerning Satan's death and the punishment of all evil spirit-beings and wicked humans will bring to a close the Sovereign Father's plan for his human creation which began with the first two humans in the garden of Eden. We are not told what will happen after Satan's death; however, the apostle Paul said, "But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him" (1.Cor.2:9 KJV).

Whatever the Sovereign Father has planned for the future after the final climactic event that destroys all evil from his kingdom, we can be sure that it will be extremely interesting, exciting, and enjoyable.

By B.L. Cocherell

b2w23
While speaking to his disciples about the end of the age of human rule on earth Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" (Lk.21:33; Mk.13:31). Many people believe that when Jesus spoke of heaven and earth passing away, he was only speaking metaphorically about the endurance of his teachings. However, he was not speaking metaphorically. While he was alive he revealed to his disciples that this present heaven and earth will cease to exist and about sixty years after his death and resurrection, he allowed the apostle John to preview this future destruction.

It is a little known fact that the prophets Isaiah and Malachi and the apostles Peter and Paul foretold the cataclysmic event that will bring an end to the existence of our earth and universe. This is what the prophet Isaiah said about this future event:

"My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished" (Isa.51:5-6 KJV).

Isaiah says that the heavens and the earth will vanish like smoke and all humans will die. Although Isaiah recorded many prophecies concerning the great time of trouble that will exist just before Christ's return, this prophecy is not one of them; this prophecy concerns the end of this entire physical universe.

Why is the Sovereign God going to completely destroy this physical universe along with all life on earth and when will it happen? The answers to these questions can be found in the meaning of the Festival of the Eighth Day, which is the last of the annual festivals that the Sovereign God commands his people to observe.

The Festival of the Eighth Day is a celebration with many meanings that point to one final climactic event that will end this physical existence. This festival pictures a new beginning at a time far in the future, past the millennial reign of Christ and the elect of God, and after the conclusion of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. This study reveals the true meaning of the awesome events that Jesus, the prophets, and the apostles spoke of concerning the reasons and timing for the end of this present physical existence.
BEYOND THE GREAT HARVEST

The Festival of the Eighth Day is a celebration with many meanings that point to one final climactic event, which will end the physical existence and the order of things as we know them today. This festival also celebrates and pictures a new beginning at a time far in the future, past the millennial reign of Christ and the elect of God, and after the conclusion of God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

THE PROPHETIC ORDER

In the prophetic order of events for the salvation of humanity, which is pictured through the annual observances and festivals, the celebration of the Festival of Shelters/Ingathering signals the end of the effort to convert humanity to the ways of God and the transformation of those who are worthy into spirit-beings.

With the harvest of humanity into the Kingdom of God finished, there will be only two major prophetic events left to take place:

1. The resurrection to death for all the incorrigibly wicked humans who have ever lived. See Ezk.18:4,20; Matt.25:31-46; Rom.6:23; Rev.20:12-15.

2. The coming of God the Father to claim the kingdom that he has placed under the rule and care of Jesus Christ. See 1.Cor.15:24-28.

THE RESURRECTION TO DEATH

While beseeching God to spare the Israelites who had rebelled at Mount Sinai, Moses says, "Yet now, if you will forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray you, out of your book which you have written. And the Lord said to Moses, Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (Ex.32:32-33 KJV). See also Psa.69:28; Rev.3:5; 22:19.

The rebellious individuals who will not repent of their evil ways will have their names taken out of the Book of Life and their existence terminated. For these individuals, there will be no eternal pain or torment, just eternal non-existence. See Psa.37:9-22,34; Ezk.18:4; 20:25.

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexuals offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1.Cor.6:9-10 NIV). See also Pro.10:30; Gal.5:21.

It is very clear that everyone who is incorrigibly wicked will cease to exist at some time in the future, because the wages of sin is death (Rom.6:23), not eternal life in hell or some other place.
DEATH BY FIRE

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev.20:14-15 KJV).

Termination of Life

"The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out; the flame of his fire stops burning. The light in his tent becomes dark; the lamp beside him goes out. . . He is torn from the security of his tent and marched off to the king of terrors. Fire resides in his tent; burning sulfur is scattered over his dwelling. His roots dry up below and his branches wither above. The memory of him perishes from the earth; he has no name in the land. He is driven from light into darkness and is banished from the world" (Job 18:5-6, 14-18 NIV).

See also Job 15:20-30; Psa.106:16-18.

Although the NIV is not a literal translation, its translators have powerfully captured the meaning of what Job was inspired to write. These verses convey the image of the destructive force of fire that will be used to terminate the existence of the incorrigibly wicked.

The Fiery Furnace

Jesus warned that a time will come when the wicked and the righteous will be separated and the wicked will be destroyed by fire:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace,. . ." (Matt.13:47-50 NIV).

"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death" (Rev.21:8 NIV).

Those punished by the second death are those who refuse to obey God's law; therefore, they deserve the death penalty.

DEATH AND HELL DESTROYED

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev.20:14 KJV).

After the resurrection to the second death, hell (the grave) and death will be destroyed and cease to exist. This condition of deathlessness will exist for the following reasons:
1. All things pertaining to physical life will no longer be relevant to the spiritual dimension of existence; therefore, the grave (hell) and death will cease to have a function and will vanish. See Rev.21:4; 1.Cor.15:54.

2. Those who die the second death will be the incorrigibly wicked of all ages. After these people die the second death, all beings who continue to live will be those who are composed of spirit. See Rev.20:15; 1.Cor.15:50; 2.Thes.1:7-9.

THE DAY THAT BURNS AS AN OVEN

"For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. . . . . And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the Lord of hosts" (Mal.4:1-3 KJV).

See also Psa.37:20; 97:3-5; 112:10; 119:119; 145:20; Pro.2:22; Isa.47:14; Nah.1:2-6; Matt.3:10-12; 13:36-46.

The prophet Malachi was inspired to show that the fate of the wicked is complete and utter destruction without a continuance of life. Malachi does not say whether or not these wicked are human or spirit-beings. He merely states that the wicked will be destroyed by fire and cease to exist.

THE APOSTLE PETER'S LETTER

The apostle Peter was also inspired to speak of the cataclysmic end of today's existence and the death of the wicked.

"Beloved this is the second letter I write to you; in order to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken by the holy prophets, and that we, the Lord and Savior apostles commanded you" (2.Pet.3:1-2 Para.).

As Peter spoke of the end of the old order of things, he encouraged the elect of God to remember the teachings of the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus Christ, because they all spoke of the events that would end the physical work of God on the earth and begin the new order of things.

"Know this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts. And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2.Pet.3:3-4 Para.).

There have always been those who have not believed God's prophets, his teachers, and his written word. However, Peter did not speak specifically of people of past ages or those of his time; he spoke of the future and those who know the prophecies concerning the final events that will end the existence of humans on earth and usher in a new age.
In verse 4, "his coming" does not refer to the second coming of Christ, it refers to the first coming of God the Father to the earth. Many of the people who will live during the time that Peter prophesied about in chapter three will have forgotten or simply will not truly believe the lessons of history and they will believe that life will continue on as it always has. But, why will they believe this?

"For they are willingly ignorant of this. That, by the word of God, the heavens came into existence eons ago, and that the earth and the waters that were divided, and that God destroyed the earth with a great flood" (2.Pet.3:5-6 Para.).

Although they will have been taught God's plan and way of life, these people will be willingly ignorant, they will not want to believe God's plan or obey his law.

Peter reminds the elect of the first worldwide destruction of the earth and its unrighteous inhabitants by water and he foretells the future destruction of the earth by fire:

"But the heavens and the earth, which now exist, by this same word are preserved until the fire of the day of judgment and punishment of ungodly men" (2.Pet.3:7 Para.).

This prophetic event concerning the earth's destruction by fire will close the final chapter of human existence and usher in a new age wherein only righteous spirit-beings will exist in the Kingdom of God on earth.

An Ending and a Beginning

The Father's primary objective and earnest desire is for all of humanity to obtain salvation and eternal life in his kingdom. The Father is extremely merciful and does not want anyone to perish; however, there is a point in time when his present plan for humanity will end and the next phase of his plan will begin. At this point in time, the physical creation that housed humanity will vanish in flames along with all wicked individuals:

"The Lord is not lax concerning his promise, as some men seem to think; but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. In which the heavens and the earth shall vanish with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with intense heat, the earth also and the works that are in it shall be burned up" (2.Pet.3:9-10 Para.).

Verse 10 shows a prophetic event that has not yet been fulfilled. This event will come at the end of one age and the beginning of another. Just as the earth was purged of all wickedness during the Great Flood of Noah's time, it will again be purified. But this time it will be purified with fire, and only righteous spirit-beings will survive.
"Because all these things shall be dissolved, what kind of people should you be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2.Pet.3:11 Para.).

Peter warns of the importance of being found righteous when this day arrives and he encourages those who are called by God to diligently pursue a righteous life. He also encourages them to look forward to the great and wonderful day when all that is impure and sinful will be eliminated and God the Father will come to dwell on the earth.

"Looking for swift appearance of the day of God, in which the heavens will be on fire and will be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with intense heat?" (2.Pet.3:12 Para.).

A NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

"Nevertheless, according to his promise we, look for the new heavens and the new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2.Pet.3:13-14 Para.). See also Matt.3:10-12; 7:19; Rev.21:27.

Righteousness is a prerequisite for existence in the new order of things. Nothing evil will exist in the new heavens and earth; all that is evil will be purged away with fire. The events that Peter spoke about are the events that will prepare the earth for the coming of God the Father.

The scriptures clearly show that the purging of the earth with fire will culminate with the coming of God the Father and his holy city to earth. From this magnificent city, God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Father's elect children will reign and rule forever over his ever-expanding Kingdom.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE KINGDOM

The apostle Paul was inspired to foretell the presentation of the earth and all the righteous individuals to God the Father who will make the earth the focal point of his realm.

"Then comes the end, when he [Jesus Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1.Cor.15:24-26 KJV).

Paul begins this prophecy with the statement "Then comes the end." But, what is this the end of and when does the end come? Here, "the end" refers to the end of the physical existence as the Father arrives to dwell upon the earth.

The day God the Father comes to earth will be the climactic end of the old order of physical existence.

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"For he has put all things under his feet. But when he says all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him" (1.Cor.15:27 KJV).

Paul speaks of a time far into the future, after many centuries of Christ's rule, when all resistance to the Kingdom of God will have been overcome and Christ will be ruling as the supreme sovereign of the earth for his Father.

"And when all things have been brought under his control, then shall the Son also himself be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1.Cor.15:28 KJV).

The presentation of the Kingdom to the Father signals the end of the opportunity for redemption and salvation. At this point in time, all of the righteous individuals who have obtained salvation will have been transformed into eternal spirit-beings.

THE COMING OF THE FATHER

The coming of the Father to earth is the primary meaning that is at the very core of the celebration and fulfillment of the Festival of the Eighth Day.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and the sea was no more" (Rev. 21:1 Para.).

Here, we see that the earth will be completely transformed into a new and different place, which has no vast oceans.

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having been prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev.21:2 Para.).

John sees the magnificent and beautiful city of God, which Abraham and his descendants Isaac and Jacob longed to see.

"By faith he [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God . . . But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he has prepared for them a city" (Heb.11:9-10,16). See also Jn.14:2-3.

This is the event which is foretold and pictured by the Festival of the Eighth Day. The old order will be gone, physical humanity will be gone, all evil spirits will be gone, and only righteous spirit-beings will exist within the Father's family and kingdom.
"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the lodging of God is with men! And he will reside with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them, as their God" (Rev.21:3 Para.).

After the announcement is made, God the Father will dwell on earth with his children. As well as fulfilling the prophetic meaning of the Festival of the Eighth Day, this event also fulfills the prophetic meaning of the Feast of Shelters, which looked forward to a time when only the righteous would dwell under the care and protection of the Father within his family and kingdom for eternity.

What comes after God brings his kingdom to earth is a prophetic promise from God the Father to his faithful children who have shown by their lives that they love him and desire with all of their being to dwell with him forever.

"And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev.21:4 Para.).

These conditions will only exist after all of humanity has advanced beyond this physical existence and into the spiritual realm of God the Father. Why will there no longer be tears, sorrow, pain, or death? This is possible because the things that were solely a part of the human experience will no longer exist.

The next few verses sum up the primary prophetic intent for the Festival of the Eighth Day and the reason to look forward to and celebrate its future fulfillment:

"And the One [the Father] sitting on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new... To the one thirsting, I will freely give of the fountain of the water of life. The one overcoming will inherit all things, and I will be God to him, and he will be the son to me" (Rev.21:5-7 Para.).

The Festival of the Eighth Day pictures and celebrates the consummation of God's plan for physical humanity. The old physical order will be gone, the new spiritual order will have begun, and God the Father will have increased his family and kingdom by adding spirit-sons made in his likeness—both in image and character.

This festival also prophetically celebrates the coming of the Father to earth and the many things that contribute to this great day, which are pictured and symbolized by the many positive concepts and meanings associated with the number eight.

With the coming of God the Father to the earth, seven of the most profound meanings of the Festival of the Eighth Day will have been fulfilled.
• The punishment of the incorrigibly wicked with death
• The ending of the old order and the beginning of the new
• The securing of eternal salvation through repentance
• A covenant relationship with the Father forever
• Firstborn status (firstborn sons of the new creation)
• Final victory over the flesh
• Access to the God family for eternity

**BEYOND THE EIGHTH DAY**

We are told very little about the Father's future plans beyond the bringing of his throne and holy city to earth. However, there is an indication in the Gospel of Luke that, in addition to its many other meanings, the Festival of the Eighth Day pictures the beginning of a larger plan for the future:

"And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk.1:31-33 KJV). See also Dan.2:44; Mic.4:7; Rev.11:15.

Notice that, in the last part of Luke 1:33, when the angel announced to Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah, he also announced that "his" (i.e., God the Father's) kingdom would continue forever. Therefore, it seems that the Father plans to continue the expansion of his kingdom into eternity.

King David who was a man after God's own heart was inspired to include the following within a prophecy of the coming Messiah:

"You will show me the path of life: in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa.16:11 KJV).

The apostle Paul spoke of the time beyond the Father's coming to earth, when he said: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him" (1.Cor.2:9 KJV).

With the prophetic fulfillment of the events pictured by the Festival of the Eighth Day, the awesome reality of what the Father has promised and prepared for his children will begin to be fully realized. Whatever the Father and Jesus Christ have planned for the future after the Eighth Day, we can be sure that it will be extremely interesting, exciting, and enjoyable.

By B.L. Cocherell
Long ago, God revealed many of the events that would take place just before and after Christ's return as King of kings and Lord of lords to the prophets Daniel and Amos and the apostle John.

The prophet Daniel was told that his prophecy would be sealed until the time of the end when the wise would understand what he had been inspired to write:

"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. And he said, go your way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tested, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand" (Dan.12:4, 9-10 Para.).

The Prophet Amos reveals, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Am.3:7 KJV).

The apostle John was shown many of the prophetic events of the end of the age and was told to record these things, so that those within the Body of Christ would understand the things and events surrounding the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth.

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God [God the Father] gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John who testified of the word of God, and the witness of Jesus Christ, even as many things as he saw. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near" (Rev.1:1-3 Para.).

The scriptures clearly show that it is God the Father and Jesus Christ's intention to reveal the meaning and timing of prophetic events to the children of God before they come to pass.

Prophecy and the Gospel

Understanding the meaning and timing of the prophetic events of the end of the age constitutes a major aspect of the Father's gospel message that Jesus said would be proclaimed before his return:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness [testimony] unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt.24:14 KJV).
The following narrative is meant to be a chronological overview of the major prophetic events that will occur just before and after Jesus Christ returns. Reference numbers are placed next to key events in order to locate them in the events table and to indicate where detailed information of each event can be found in this study.

This narrative and study represent our best understanding of the prophetic events that will occur surrounding the return of Christ. Any errors in this narrative and study are errors of men and not errors of God. We strongly suggest that you approach this study prayerfully, remembering what God inspired Paul to write: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15 NKJV).

THE MINISTRY OF ELIJAH [1]

One of the first events that will occur during the end of the age and shortly before Christ's return is the ministry of the prophetic Elijah. Malachi 4:5-6 indicates that Elijah will play a major role in the restoration of God's truth among the people of God and he will also be a factor in the establishment of a dynamic work for the proclaiming of the Father's good news message and the return of Jesus Christ to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM

After the arrival of Elijah and the renewal of the faith that was once delivered to God's chosen people, the next major event will be the building of a temple in Jerusalem for the purpose of worshiping the God of Israel through the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system. The building of a temple in Jerusalem by the Jews will signal that the return of Jesus Christ is near. This event will set into motion irreversible events that will lead to Christ's return as a conquering King.

HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH

The prophecies of both Haggai and Zechariah give details concerning the cycle of events that relate to the beginning of the end of this age, such as who the individuals are who will be personally involved in the planning and execution of the construction of the temple, the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah by the high priest, and the establishment of a congregation of God in Jerusalem to proclaim the Father's good news message.

ZERUBBABEL AND JOSHUA

The prophetic Zerubbabel seems to be a high level Israeli government official, and the prophetic Joshua is clearly the high priest who officiates over the new temple in Jerusalem. It is very likely that both of these individuals will become the Two Witnesses of God who are spoken of in Revelation 11:1-12 and will proclaim God's plan for the salvation of humanity and the return of Jesus Christ for 3½ years. See Zech. 4:8-9.
A PROPHET AND MESSENGER SENT REGARDING THE TEMPLE [2, 3]

Haggai 1:1-8 shows that a prophet of God will be sent to the prophetic Zerubbabel and Joshua with a message regarding the building of a temple in Jerusalem.

Haggai 1:13-15 shows that God will send a messenger again to encourage these two men to begin construction of the temple. These meetings between a prophet of God and a messenger from God will likely occur about 4 to 6 years before Christ's return and lead to the construction of the temple in the fall of the year near the Festival of Trumpets. The construction of the temple seems to occur during a time of relative peace on earth (Zechariah 1:1-8).

THE FUTURE REVEALED TO ZERUBBABEL AND JOSHUA [4, 5]

Haggai 2:1-9 shows that shortly after the building of a temple begins in Jerusalem (Daniel 9:27), a messenger from God will be sent to Zerubbabel and Joshua to inform them of world events that will come to pass. Based on a date within Haggai, chapter 2, the time setting for this meeting will be in the fall of the year, about 4 to 6 years before Christ's return.

A SIGNET FOR GOD [6]

Scripture indicates that the project manager for the building of the temple will be the prophetic Zerubbabel. After the foundation of the temple is laid, God will send a messenger to Zerubbabel to tell him that he will become a signet for God (Haggai 2:10-12,15-23). Making Zerubbabel a signet for God means that he is made a personal representative and spokesman for God in the end of the age. This is also an indication that he will be one of the Two Witnesses.

THE COMPLETION OF THE TEMPLE [7]

The scriptures do not indicate how long it will take to construct the temple; however, once it is complete, animal sacrifices will begin to be offered to God there. The dedication of the temple could occur on or near Passover or later in the year near or on the Festival of Lights. Although the temple dedication does not have to be performed on either of these festivals, it certainly could because of the historical precedent. If the Levitical priesthood do their job correctly, there is a reasonable likelihood that God will honor their effort and allow his glory to enter the Holy of Holies within the temple.
FOUR PROPHETS OF GOD MEET JOSHUA [8]

Three prophets will be sent to meet with another prophet in Jerusalem (Zech.6:10), and then all four will go to Joshua, the high priest, to present him with the faith once delivered which concerns Jesus Christ and his Father's good news message. They do this because the high priest is going to be instrumental in proclaiming this message as one of the Two Witnesses (Zech.6:11). This event seems to constitute the beginning of the conversion process of the Two Witnesses. The date for this meeting is after the construction of the temple is completed and the sacrifices have been instituted. And it appears to be in early winter, about 4¾ to 6 years before Christ's return.

CONVERSION OF THE TWO WITNESSES [9]

The conversion process for the Two Witnesses (Zech.3:3-7) seems to fit in the time frame from early winter to late spring, which is about 4 to 4½ years before the first resurrection. The four Prophets of God appear to be in Jerusalem working with the Two Witnesses, teaching them about Jesus Christ and the gospel message.

PARALLEL EVENTS [10]

There seems to be a parallel between prophetic events and the pattern of Jesus' 3½ year ministry and what occurred after his crucifixion and resurrection in 30 A.D. Following his resurrection, he told his disciples (there were about 120) to wait in Jerusalem until he sent the holy spirit to empower them and make them a part of the Family of God. See Acts 1:1-15.

Zechariah 6:15 indicates that the elect of God come to Jerusalem from other parts of the world to help build a spiritual temple of God, which is the congregation of God. It is very likely that the Jerusalem church will begin on the Festival of Pentecost four years before the first resurrection and Christ's return.10

The first age of the church began with about 120 people and quickly grew to many thousands in Jerusalem before they sent out people to evangelize the other tribes of Israel and the Gentiles. Perhaps we will see the same pattern of events as in the first age of the church occur in the end of the age along with great signs and wonders.

Regardless of whether or not the proclamation of the Gospel begins in a major way from Jerusalem, it will begin. And when it does begin, it will expand rapidly to the Israelitish nations of the world where God has prepared people for his calling. After this, God will reach out to the non-Israelitish nations, particularly those that are descendants of Abraham, which include the Islamic nations of the world.
THE TWO WITNESSES PREACH FOR 3½ YEARS [11]

Very near the end of this age, the true gospel is going to be proclaimed as a witness and warning to God's chosen people and the world at large (Matt.24:14). Although all the various congregations of God will be proclaiming the Father's good news message, a major part of the responsibility for witnessing to the world, warning them to repent, and pouring out God's punishments on this evil world falls to the Two Witnesses in Jerusalem. If these two men follow the pattern of Jesus' ministry, they will only preach for 3½ years before they are martyred.

PERSECUTION OF THE ELECT BY JEWS AND THE BEAST

Because the high priest and others of the priesthood begin to preach Christ as the long awaited Messiah, the Jews are going to be incensed and they will begin to persecute the Father's chosen people, just as they did in the first age of the church. See Matt.5:10-12; Mk.13:9-13; Jn.15:19-20.

A martyrdom of the elect is predicted in Revelation 6:9-11 as the fifth seal is opened. This martyrdom and persecution by the Jews and the Beast will end with the opening of the sixth seal (Rev.6:12-17) and the heavenly signs which will occur 3½ years before Christ returns.

ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION AND THE INVASION OF ISRAEL [12,13]

God will not allow his chosen people to go into tribulation and captivity without first giving them a warning; thus, the Jews will be given a resounding warning before the nation of Israel is invaded and her people are taken into captivity.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION [12]

There appears to be about ten months between the time that the high priest and many of the priesthood begin to follow the teachings of Christ and the event that the Bible refers to as the Abomination of Desolation (Lk.21:20-24; Matt.24:15-22). This event foreshadows the invasion of Israel and its subsequent captivity (Dan.12:11-13; Matt.24:15-21) and it will occur when the political leader of the Beast Alliance (the man of sin) desecrates the temple in Jerusalem by entering into it and declaring himself God. Daniel 8:11-14 refers to this Abomination of Desolation as lasting 1150 days (2,300 evening and morning sacrifices). This will probably occur in the spring of the year and will be immediately followed by the invasion of Israel by the Beast alliance and its Islamic allies, which will end the daily sacrifice.
THE INVASION OF ISRAEL [13]

The invasion of Israel will come from the European part of the Beast alliance of nations that is supported by the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Russia. The Beast's army will come through Israel on its way to allegedly take care of some problems in Egypt. While doing this, they will surround Jerusalem as a supposed protective measure against Israel's Islamic neighbors; however, this is just a ploy to carry out a sneak attack on Israel.

The Jews and others that heed the warning recorded in Luke 21:20-24 and Matthew 24:15-22— "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, and the Abomination of Desolation standing in the Holy Place, flee to the mountains."—will escape with their lives, but the rest will either die or suffer great persecution and another holocaust very similar to the one that occurred during World War II. During this captivity, some of these Jews will also be sent to other areas of the world as slaves (Isa.11:11-16).

The scriptural reference to this invasion of Israel is found in Daniel 11:40-45, where Egypt pushes at the Beast and the Beast invades Egypt by sea and via the coastal areas of Sinai. Shortly thereafter, the 10 nation Islamic alliance will move their armies to the North and East borders of Israel which will cause the Israelis to divert their attention away from Egypt and the army of the Beast alliance.

After conquering Israel, the leader of the Beast alliance will establish his palace in Jerusalem and begin an ongoing effort to stop the Elect of God and the Two Witnesses from proclaiming the Father's good news message. It is during this time that many will come to understand God's plan for humanity and will accept the Father's call to salvation. It is also during this time that great persecution will come upon the Father's children who are not found worthy to escape Satan's wrath.

THE BEAST AND ITS MUSLIM ALLIANCE

It is important to note that there will be a very fragile alliance between the Beast alliance of nations and a loosely allied coalition of 10 Islamic nations that surround Israel. These are the 10 nations that are represented by the ten toes of the great image in Daniel chapter 2.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST [14]

The implementation of the 'Mark of the Beast' (Rev.3:10; 13:11-18) divides people into two distinct categories: those who worship the beast and those who do not. The implementation of the Mark of the Beast and the forced worship of its image (idolatry) will probably happen in late spring of the year and perhaps on the Festival of Pentecost, two years before the first resurrection.
SEALED FOR PROTECTION [15]

When this event occurs, heavy persecution is going to come upon the elect of God until they are sealed for protection by God's angel. This sealing for protection may occur about 1½ years before Christ's return. Revelation 7:3-14 talks about the sealing of all those who have not taken the Mark of the Beast. Those sealed will also include 144,000 Israelites and the large number of people from other nationalities.

SEALS AND PLAGUES

Revelation, chapters 4-6 reveal the four seals that Jesus said would be opened in order to begin the end of the age events. These four prophetic seals are commonly known as the four horsemen of the apocalypse. The exact time period for the circumstances and conditions pictured by these four horses and their riders is not known, but may have began shortly after John received his vision. The horsemen may have been instructed to intensify their efforts from that time forward until the opening of the sixth seal when the elect of God will be sealed for protection and the seven trumpet plagues that will begin the Day of the Lord.

THE DAY OF THE LORD BEGINS [16]

In Revelation 8:5-13, the event called the Day of the Lord begins. This is the time when Jesus Christ will begin to bring severe punishment upon this world's population for its disobedience to God's laws and ways. It is during these punishments that the surface of the earth will suffer tremendous destruction, hundreds of millions and perhaps billions of people will die, governments will collapse, and the most evil and powerful of the world's religions will be destroyed and her capital city laid waste.

The 7 Trumpet Plagues

There are seven trumpet plagues (cataclysmic events), which seem to be orchestrated by the Two Witnesses who are still in Jerusalem.

In the first trumpet plague there is hail, fire, and blood, a third of the trees are burned, and all the green grass is burned (Rev.8:7).

The second trumpet plague shows a great mountain cast into the sea and a third of the sea becoming blood, and a third of all the living creatures dying in the sea, and a third of all the ships being destroyed (Rev.8:8-9).

The third trumpet plague shows a star called Wormwood falling to earth and a third of the waters of the earth being poisoned (Rev.8:10-11).

The first three plagues seem to strike at the base of the Beast alliance's economy, because the destruction of trees and other vegetation will affect the food supply, and the destruction of shipping will affect the distribution of products and food supplies. These plagues begin to destroy this world's gods of money, materialism, and power.
The fourth trumpet plague decreases the brightness of the sun, moon, and stars. This could be caused by volcanic eruptions that spew massive amounts of ash into the atmosphere (Rev.8:12).

**THE MESSAGE OF THE SEVEN THUNDER [17]**

As the events of the Day of the Lord progress closer to Jesus Christ's return to conquer the earth, there will be a message that goes out called the message of the seven thunders (Rev.10:4, 7-11). This message seems to be delivered about 9 months before Christ's return as King of the earth, and it is the last major prophetic message from a prophet of God (Rev.10:7).

Although the context of the message of the seven thunders is not recorded in the Book of Revelation, we can assume that the message concerns an announcement of the coming Kingdom of God, a warning for the wicked to repent of their wickedness and worship the true God, and a warning of continued punishment if they do heed the message.

**GOD'S AVENGERS STRIKE [18]**

The fifth trumpet plague is also referred to as the first woe (Rev.9:1-11), which will likely occur right after the message of the seven thunders. For five months, during the 5th trumpet plague, avengers who are supernatural beings created by God will inflict pain on all those who have taken the Mark of the Beast.

**TWO-THIRDS OF MANKIND DIES [19]**

The second woe, which is the sixth trumpet plague (Rev.9:13-18), occurs when 200,000,000 of God's avengers attack the evil nations of this world. These are created beings through which God will kill two-thirds of mankind. When this plague ends, the seven last plagues of Revelation 15:1-6 will begin.

**TWO WITNESSES MARTYRED [20]**

As the time when Jesus Christ will come to gather the Father's elect children and raise all the righteous dead in the first resurrection approaches, there will be a concerted effort by the leader of the Beast alliance and his people to kill the Two Witnesses. But, Jesus will have given supernatural power and protection to these two men, so that no one can kill them until he allows them to be killed. He will allow them to be killed 3½ days before his return to gather his Father's elect of all ages.

**THE FIRST RESURRECTION [21]**

After the Two Witnesses are killed, their bodies will lie in a street in Jerusalem, and people will rejoice because the ones who tormented them for 3½ years will be dead (Rev.11:7-12).
But after 3½ days, these two men will be resurrected and ascend to meet Jesus Christ in the air. After this, the gathering of the righteous from the dead and the righteous from the earth will begin. This awesome event will likely occur on the Feast of Pentecost, which portrays the Father's first harvest of humanity into his Kingdom. See 1 Thes. 4:15-17.

At this time, all the dead in Christ, who were called to participate in the first resurrection from the time of Adam will be resurrected and ascend to meet Jesus Christ and join God the Father at his throne. And those who are alive and have been sealed among the elect will be changed in a moment—"in a twinkling of an eye"—and born into the Family and Kingdom of God.

Cleansing of the Sanctuary [22]

The plagues of God will continue for a period of time after the first resurrection to complete what is prophetically called "the cleansing of the sanctuary" in Daniel 8:14.

Seven Last Plagues Begin [23]

Although humanity will have received warning after warning to repent and worship the true God and will have been severely punished for their refusal to repent, they will still refuse to acknowledge and honor the true God and his Son. Because of their lack of repentance, the third woe, which comprises the seven last plagues, will be poured out (Rev. 16). These plagues are cataclysmic in magnitude and will inflict great pain and suffering similar to the plagues that were poured out on Egypt many thousands of years ago.

The first plague is painful sores which will fall upon all people who have the 'Mark of the Beast' (Rev. 16:2).

- The second plague will turn the sea to blood (Rev. 16:3).
- The third plague will cause the rivers and streams to become as blood (Rev. 16:4).
- The fourth plague will increase the sun's heat seven times (600/700 °F) and scorch the surface of the earth (Isa. 30:26; Rev. 16:8-9).
- The fifth plague will plunge the nations of the Beast alliance into total darkness. Along with this darkness comes agonizing pain (Rev. 16:10).
- The sixth plague will dry the Euphrates River and it precipitates the gathering of the Beast's alliance of nations together (Rev. 16:12-16) for the battle of Armageddon where they will fight Christ and his army of angelic warriors and the elect of God as they return to conquer the earth.

It is obvious that these seven last plagues will occur in a very short period of time, very likely within a month.
COALITION OF NATIONS [24]

The sixth plague coincides with the coalition of 10 Muslim nations receiving power with the Beast for one hour (approximately 15 days) (Rev.17:12).

BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON [25]

The seventh and last plague (Rev.16:16-21; 19:11-21) is the battle at Armageddon (Zech.14:1-4). Preceding this great battle, there will be awesome heavenly signs, lightning, thunder, and an earthquake in which every mountain and every island are moved out of their place, and falling hailstones weighing over a hundred pounds.

JESUS RETURNS [26]

At this point in history, the people who are left alive on earth will be so deceived that they will believe that Christ and his servants are invaders from outer space who should be fought against and destroyed. Jesus Christ will destroy these armies on the plains of Megiddo. The blood that drains from the bodies of those who are destroyed in this great battle will run as deep as horses bridles in this great valley that is more than a hundred miles long.

It is not clear how many people will survive all of the events that will occur in the end of the age, but we do know that less than a third of the Jews will survive. What is clear is that the world's population will be greatly reduced and the earth's surface will be almost totally destroyed.

SATAN BOUND [27]

After Jesus Christ returns to this earth as the Conquering King and descends upon the Mount of Olives, which will split into a great valley, Satan will be constrained and cast into the Lake of Fire where the leader of the Beast alliance of nations and the great False Prophet will have been cast. The binding of Satan will probably be on or near the Day of Atonement.

NATIONAL ISRAEL GATHERED [28]

Shortly after Christ returns, he will begin to gather all the people who comprise the twelve tribes of national Israel. These Israelites will be gathered from all over the world and brought to a wilderness area (Ezk.20:33-35), so that they can be established as a nation again and fulfill their destiny, which is to be an example to the world of how to live God's way of life.
In Ezekiel 20, it is prophesied that all the Israelites who are gathered after the return of Christ will be passed under the rod. The passing under the rod is the process by which rebellious Israelites will be separated from those who are willing to accept God's rule in their lives. No rebel will be allowed to become a part of the new nation of Israel, just as no rebel was allowed to enter the promised land with Joshua. Those who want to repent and accept God's way of life will be allowed to enter the land of Israel and build a new nation.

This event is also referred to as "a nation born in one day" (Isa. 66: 5-9, 12-13, 15-16, 18-20, 23). At this time, God will formalize his new covenant with national Israel, which includes the Jews and the other eleven tribes.

**A SPECIAL RESURRECTION OF ISRAELITES [29, 30]**

At some time in the future after the return of Christ, when the world is at peace, there will be a special resurrection of all the Israelites who have died. They will be resurrected to a physical life and given an opportunity to accept God's plan of salvation (Ezk. 37:1-14). After a lifetime of perhaps 100 years, any Israelite who rejects God's way of life will be executed in the Lake of Fire. And those who accept God's way of life will be changed to spirit-beings and given eternal life in the God Family.

**GENERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD [31]**

At the end of Christ's thousand year reign, there will be a resurrection of all people who have ever lived and died without having an opportunity for salvation. See Rev. 20:5, 11-13.

Thus, all of humanity throughout all the ages, from the creation of Adam to a time far into the future, will eventually have an opportunity to understand the truth of God and decide whether they will choose eternal life or eternal death.

**SATAN LOOSED [32]**

Satan who was bound after the Battle of Armageddon will be loosed for a short time to deceive the nations after Christ's 1,000 year reign of peace (Rev. 20:2-3, 7-10). How long this deception continues is not clear; the scriptures only say that he is loosed a short time.

**LAKE OF FIRE FOR INCORRIGIBLY WICKED [33]**

All the incorrigibly wicked humans who have lived through all ages will be resurrected to physical life and executed in the Lake of Fire, which is the second death. There will be no resurrection from this death (Rev. 20:14-15).

At some point after this final rebellion of humanity, Satan will also be destroyed (Rev. 20:10; 2.Pet. 3:10-13). This seems to be the point in time when the wicked will become ashes under the feet of the righteous (Mal. 4:1,3).
SATAN'S DEATH [34]

At some point after this final rebellion of humanity, Satan will also be destroyed (Rev.20:10; 2.Pet.3:10-13). This seems to be the point in time when the wicked will become ashes under the feet of the righteous (Mal.4:1,3).

HEAVEN AND EARTH TO VANISH AND BE RECREATED [35]

After the final phase of God the Father's plan for the salvation of humanity there is one final event to take place—the total destruction of this physical existence and the creation of new heavens and a new earth. See Isa.51:5-6; 1.Pet.3:4-14.

THE COMING OF GOD THE FATHER [36]

After the new heavens and earth have been created the Sovereign Father comes to earth with his holy city (Rev.21:1-2; Heb.11:9-10,16) to dwell with those who have obtained salvation and who are now spirit-beings (Rev.21:3-70).

THE FUTURE OF GOD'S FAMILY

What lies in the distant future beyond all the resurrections and the reign of Christ over physical humans is not totally known. But we are told that there will be no end to the increase of God's family. This future increase seems to be portrayed in God's annual Festival of the Eighth Day, which pictures a new beginning and looks forward to the time when God the Father will bring the New Jerusalem to the earth, make it the center of his vast realm, and begin the next phase of his plan for eternity.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Prophecy continues to be fulfilled. Although exact dates may be uncertain, the sequence of prophetic events will happen at some point in time. Having this knowledge gives you the opportunity to choose. You can choose to believe what God has recorded in the Bible, study further, turn to God and choose life, or you can choose to reject the truth of God and choose death. The choice is yours.

By B.L. Cocherell

b2w25
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event #</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Estimated Time before Christ Returns</th>
<th>Scriptural Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ministry of Elijah</td>
<td>7 or more years</td>
<td>Mal. 4:5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Prophet sent to Zerubbabel and Joshua regarding the Temple</td>
<td>About 4 to 6 years</td>
<td>Hag. 1:1-8; Zech. 4:8-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Messenger sent to encourage Zerubbabel and Joshua to begin building the Temple</td>
<td>About 4 to 6 years</td>
<td>Hag. 1:13-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Covenant between Beast and other national leaders</td>
<td>About 7 years</td>
<td>Dan. 9:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Future revealed to Zerubbabel and Joshua</td>
<td>Fall season, 4 to 6 years</td>
<td>Hag. 2:1-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Zerubbabel will be a signet fo God</td>
<td>Month of December 4¾ to 5½ years</td>
<td>Hag. 2:10-12, 15-23; Zech.4:1-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Completion of the Temple</td>
<td>4¾ to 5½ years</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Four Prophets of God meet Joshua</td>
<td>4¾ to 6 years</td>
<td>Zech. 6:10-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Conversion of the Two Witnesses</td>
<td>4 to 4½ years</td>
<td>Zech. 6:10-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Parallel events</td>
<td>4¾ years</td>
<td>Zech. 6:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Two Witnesses preach for 3½ years</td>
<td>Winter season, 3½ years</td>
<td>Rev. 11:13-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Abomination of Desolation stops the sacrifices at the Temple</td>
<td>Spring season, 3½ years</td>
<td>Dan. 8:11-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Invasion of Israel</td>
<td>Spring season, 3½ years</td>
<td>Matt. 24:15-22, Lk. 21:20-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Implementation of the Mark of the Beast</td>
<td>2½ to 3 years</td>
<td>Rev. 13:11-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sealing of those who refuse the Mark of the Beast</td>
<td>Winter season, about 1½ years</td>
<td>Rev. 7:3-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Day of the Lord begins with the trumpet plagues</td>
<td>Winter season, about 1½ years</td>
<td>Rev. 8:5-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Message of the Seven Thunders</td>
<td>Winter season, about 10 months</td>
<td>Rev. 10:7-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>God's avengers strike for 5 months (the first woe)</td>
<td>About 5 to 10 months</td>
<td>Rev. 9:1-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Two thirds of mankind die (the second woe)</td>
<td>About 3 months</td>
<td>Rev. 9:12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Two Witnesses martyred</td>
<td>About 90-100 days</td>
<td>Rev. 11:7-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>First resurrection, Feast of Pentecost</td>
<td>About 90-100 days</td>
<td>Rev. 20:6; Rev.15:1-2; 1. Thes.4:15-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Cleansing of the Sanctuary</td>
<td>About 90-100 days</td>
<td>Dan. 8:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Seven last plagues begin (the third woe)</td>
<td>About 1 to 2 months</td>
<td>Rev. 17:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Islamic alliance receives power with Beast for one prophetic hour</td>
<td>About 15 days</td>
<td>Rev. 10:7; 11:14-15; 16:17; 17:12</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Jesus returns as King of kings, Feast of Trumpets</td>
<td>Return of Christ</td>
<td>Rev. 19:11-16; Zech. 14:1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Satan bound for 1,000 years</td>
<td>On or shortly after Day of Atonement</td>
<td>Rev. 20:1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>National Israel gathered to the wilderness</td>
<td>Sometime after Christ returns</td>
<td>Dan. 12:11; Ezk. 20:33-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Special resurrection of Israelites</td>
<td>Sometime after Christ returns</td>
<td>Ezk. 37:1-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Time of peace begins for 1,000 years</td>
<td>Sometime after Christ returns</td>
<td>Rev. 20:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>General resurrection of the dead to have first opportunity for salvation</td>
<td>Sometime after the 1,000-year reign of Christ</td>
<td>Rev. 20:5, 11-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Satan loosed for a short time</td>
<td>Sometime after the 1,000-year reign of Christ</td>
<td>Rev. 20:2-3, 7-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Incorrigibly wicked executed in the Lake of Fire</td>
<td>After all humanity has an opportunity for salvation</td>
<td>Rev. 20:10; 2. Pet. 3:10-12</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Satan’s death</td>
<td>After all humanity has an opportunity for salvation</td>
<td>Ezk. 28:1-91; Rev. 20:10; 2. Pet. 3:10-13</td>
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<td>Heaven and earth to vanish and be recreated</td>
<td>After all phases of God’s plan for the salvation of humanity are finished</td>
<td>Isa. 51:5-6; 1. Pet. 3-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>The coming of God the Father to Earth</td>
<td>After the new heavens and earth have been created</td>
<td>Rev. 21:1-2; Heb.11:9-10,16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MISSION STATEMENT

We sincerely hope that you have found these topical studies into the Bible intellectually challenging, spiritually enlightening and beneficial.

For those wondering who authored this study, what the study's purpose is, or how to participate in this educational program, the following brief summary will give some insight into who we are and what we are trying to accomplish.

This Work

This work is a non-profit, volunteer effort. There are no salaried writers, employees, or staff. The volunteers are engaged in an ongoing effort to discover, research, understand, and publish foundational truths that have been hidden in the Bible for centuries. We believe that, when these foundational truths are correctly understood and practiced, they will bring people happy, abundant, and productive lives with the promise of eternal life after physical death.

Our Goals

Our primary goal is to share our knowledge and understanding of the Sovereign God's plan and purpose for humanity with those who are interested in living according to His law, and not by the dictates and traditions of men. Our secondary goal is to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God as a warning and a witness to humanity before the Messiah returns to rule the earth.

If You Want To Know More

If you want to know more about us, the work we are doing, or how you can participate in our biblically based educational and research projects, contact us at: www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net
WHO IS GOD?
WHAT IS THE BIBLE AND ITS MESSAGE?

The identity of God is one of the greatest mysteries of the entire Bible. Without understanding who God is, it is impossible to understand the biblical record, the reason humans exist on earth, and the message that Jesus brought about how to enter the Kingdom of God as an immortal spirit-being.

People all over the world are searching for a way to live longer, healthier, and happier lives. The biblical record reveals that the purpose for your existence is to give you an opportunity to live forever in a place where no evil exists and where you will have a wonderful life filled with all that is good and enjoyable. This is the good news message that Jesus Christ brought from the Sovereign God.

This book reveals the true identity of the Sovereign God, the Creator God, and Jesus Christ. Additionally, this book unlocks many of the Bible's mysteries and secrets which explain God's awesome and wonderful plan for humanity.

THE GIFT OF IMMORTALITY

The magnitude of the opportunities and rewards that the Sovereign God offers to those he calls to salvation through repentance, baptism, and conversion is almost beyond comprehension; nevertheless, what is offered can be obtained by those who are willing to become obedient to his way of life.

This book answers many questions about how to enter the Sovereign God's family and kingdom as an immortal spirit-being and what he expects of his children while they live in human form.

HUMAN LIFE
DEATH AND BEYOND

Is death the end of human existence? According to the Bible, the answer is No! There are several major resurrections of the dead to physical life noted in the Bible in which an individual's eternal destiny is determined.

This book explains the four major resurrections mentioned in the Bible, who will be in each resurrection, and when each one will occur. This book answers many questions about heaven, hell, the state of the dead, immortality, predestination, reincarnation, and much more.
THE COMMANDED OBSERVANCES AND HOLY CONVOCATIONS
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Throughout human history, anyone who wanted to worship the true God had to do so within the boundaries of strict rules that were set forth by God. The foundational elements of this worship system are shown through the sacrificial system and the commanded observances and holy convocations.

This two volume study answers many questions about the Sovereign God's plan for humanity, explains many of the literal and prophetic meanings of the various observances and convocations, and reveals a new dimension of understanding into God's plan for the salvation of humanity—past, present, and future—that has been hidden for many centuries.

SURVIVE AND THRIVE AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST

During the centuries that followed the demise of the early church, those who clung to the basic truths of God also accepted much error and made many departures from the truth once delivered. Along with this departure from truth, much knowledge and understanding about spiritual leadership, congregational organization and government, and problem solving within the body of believers was lost.

This book contains studies that should give any serious student of the Bible enough knowledge to understand who the spiritual leaders of the church are and are not, the organizational and governmental structure of the early church, and what one's attitude, behavior, and responsibility should be pertaining to the organizational and governmental structure of the church and those who govern and serve the elect of God through it.

BIBLICAL LAW PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Throughout much of Christian history, there has been much confusion and misunderstanding as to what constitutes God's law and whether or not any or all of it applies to Christians today. This study gives some unique insights into the Sovereign God's purpose for humanity and shows how the first humans came under the authority of God's law, how the law applies to Christians today, how it will apply to humans after Christ returns, and how to have a harmonious relationship with the Sovereign God and Jesus Christ through the practice of God's law.

This book gives logical, concise, and meaningful answers to many questions about God's law and its application today.
OUR PLACE IN THE SPIRIT REALM
GODS • ANGELS • DEMONS

The spirit realm and the beings who inhabit it and interact with this physical realm are a reality which should not be casually dismissed as being unimportant to one's daily life.

The Bible contains much information that true Christians need to know about the Sovereign God, the Creator God, Jesus Christ, and other spirit-beings.

This book is a serious discussion about the reality of spirit-beings, the tremendous positive impact on mankind that some of these beings have had, are having, and will have in the future and the serious danger posed by some spirit-beings as they interact with humans and this physical dimension of time and space.

SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN AND DOCTRINES OF DEMONS

In the Book of Revelation, there is a cryptic reference to individuals Christ identifies as being of the synagogue of Satan. Additionally the apostle Paul warned the evangelist Timothy to beware of those who would depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. Is it possible that much of what is taught as biblical truth today is not truth, but a clever deception?

This book identifies the Synagogue of Satan and its members and documents a number of popular beliefs held by many professing Christians that are in reality teachings of evil spirits, which are meant to prevent an understanding of true biblical precepts, principles, and laws that lead to everlasting life when practiced?

BOOK ORDERS AND DONATION INFORMATION

5½" x 8½" soft cover copies of each book noted in the above list may be ordered from www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net. Copies of each book and the topical studies contained in each book may be download free of charge from the websites noted. This book or the ones noted in the above list can be ordered from the printer for mass distribution at cost plus shipping and handling.

Donations are gladly accepted to help defray the cost of our publishing, shipping, and the maintenance of our websites.