

# A Study on the Seven Seals and the 144,000

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## **Attention Readers**

A few years ago, I decided to write a commentary on Daniel and Revelation. Because the task is lengthy, I decided to publish portions of this commentary as I completed them. After two years of writing, I published the first segment under the title, *Daniel, Unlocked for the Final Generation*. Now that I have completed three chapters in Revelation, I have decided to publish another segment so that interested people can avoid waiting for the entire commentary to be completed. Since the Daniel segment consists of eight chapters, this segment begins Chapter 9.

Larry Wilson

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# Chapter 9

## Getting Started with the Book of Revelation

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**“For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.”**

– Habakkuk 2:3

### **The Big Picture**

In the simplest of terms, the book of Daniel reveals two great truths for the final generation. First, the five prophecies in Daniel operate like “our Grandfather’s” clock that is faithfully counting off the years which God has predetermined for the duration of sin. In this sense, the rise and fall of kingdoms are like the swing of a great pendulum. The second truth is that God has a definite plan for Earth. He has not abandoned or forgotten this tiny fallen planet. God is not preoccupied with more important things in His ever expanding universe. With infinite wisdom and foreknowledge, God has identified the nations of Earth and their duration. He has also numbered each of our years and limited sin’s existence. (Daniel 2:45; 4:17; 5:26) The book of Daniel emphasizes this second point by deliberately using six prophetic time periods.

The book of Revelation also contains two great truths for the final generation. First, Jesus is not to be confused with the icon that people have made Him to be. During the past 2,000 years, Christianity has distorted the character, authority and teachings of Jesus, and a great gulf exists between today’s degenerate perception of Jesus and the actual truth about Jesus. During the Great Tribulation, this icon will be shattered and the truth about Jesus will unfold. The second truth is that humanity has a malicious and deadly enemy who is intent on our destruction. Because we cannot see Lucifer and his angels, we grossly overlook the fact that Lucifer and his demons have a powerful influence over the attitudes, decisions and passions of people. Therefore, our perception of life and human history is incomplete because we cannot see the intervention and influence of demons. However, this will change. During the Great Tribulation, God will permit the final generation to see Lucifer and his demons physically so that incarnate evil might be fully exposed. (Revelation 17:8)

When the books of Daniel and Revelation are properly aligned, one harmonious story unfolds. Daniel reveals that Earth’s days are

numbered and Revelation discloses the importance and majesty of Jesus. These two books assure us of a wonderful truth: In God's time, righteousness will triumph over evil and the saints will inherit the earth. Jesus will use circumstances during the Great Tribulation to separate people who love truth and righteousness from those who do not. At the end of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will appear in clouds of the brightest glory, majestically personifying the values and ideals for which many saints will die.

### **Obstacles in Understanding Revelation**

Before we examine the book of Revelation, a few introductory words may be helpful. Everyone, including me, approaches the book of Revelation with ignorance, bias and baggage. Because apocalyptic prophecy reveals the comprehensive ways of God, the books of Daniel and Revelation are not easy to understand at first. It takes determined effort to become acquainted with all of the parts and pieces. For this reason, Jesus has promised to generously bless us with inexpressible joy and peace if we push forward with determination to understand His Word. (Hebrews 11:6; Revelation 1:3) Various obstacles often skew the intended meaning of prophecy and here are three significant hurdles that you should consider.

#### **1. Traditional Views Conflict with End Time Truth**

Because the book of Daniel was sealed until the time of the end (Daniel 12:4, 9), we must realize that Daniel cannot be completely understood until the appointed time arrives. As it turns out, the intended meaning of Revelation has also been sealed because many prophecies in Revelation depend upon certain facts established in the book of Daniel. The net effect is that traditional views on prophecy become obsolete when Daniel is unsealed. Discarding the old and embracing the new is not easy, but we have to press forward in faith. Longstanding views on Daniel and Revelation cannot be deemed accurate and reliable unless they conform with the rules found in Daniel.

Since the rules of interpretation were sealed in the book of Daniel, there was no need for God to seal the book of Revelation. (Revelation 22:10) When these two books are properly aligned, we can observe that Daniel mainly concerns the past and Revelation mainly concerns the future. We will also learn that Daniel and Revelation overlap on five prophetic events. This overlapping is important because it proves that Revelation uses the same rules as Daniel. We have twenty-six centuries of history and fulfilled prophecy with which to test and verify the rules in Daniel. If we apply Daniel's rules to Revelation, we find perfect harmony

between Daniel and Revelation. Once we have confidence in the validity of the rules, we can then assemble and understand obscure and mysterious portions of Scripture with a higher degree of certainty.

During the past two thousand years, Bible prophecy has received a lot of interest, but not much respect. The problem is that prophetic views come and go like newspapers. Hundreds, if not thousands, of prophetic views have been published, and few of them have proven to have any lasting value. Nevertheless, Bible prophecy continues to be a subject of interest because human beings are inherently interested in “future telling.” Unfortunately, the failure of prophetic exposition in ages past has predisposed many Christians to fall for the argument that a careful examination of prophecy is not important. Many Christians justify their indifference toward Daniel and Revelation with this argument: “All that matters is my salvation.” Loving the Lord and submitting to the authority of Jesus is the first step in salvation, but learning and growing into the character of Christ (sanctification) through a study of His Word is not optional. (Ephesians 4; 1 Thessalonians 4; Revelation 2 and 3) Bible prophecy singularly reveals God’s character, plans and purposes. Is it possible to truly love our Savior, eagerly await His arrival, yet refuse to examine His purposes and plans? Could our perception of God and the reality of God be improperly aligned in our thinking? In other words, will you be able to explain and justify the actions of God to others when His wrath breaks out against Earth? This is one of the benefits of understanding Bible prophecy. We have time to study and reflect on the ways of God so that when He does act, we will not be overwhelmed with surprise or discouragement.

We live in a world of many diverse religions that have enormous blinding power, so God has to level the playing field for all humankind during the Great Tribulation. He will test everyone with a simple test that will not favor any religious body! Everyone will be forced into making the same simple choice. The choice will be whether to reject traditional views which are vigorously defended by religious leaders, or accept the new light shining from God’s Word. God will test Christians and non-Christians to see who will receive His truth and reject their religious heritage. Of course, this will be very hard to do. Jewish leaders could not bring themselves to do it when Jesus came to Earth. Later, Catholic leaders would not accept the claims of Protestants when Luther revealed God’s truths to them. Unfortunately, the book of Revelation predicts religious systems of the last generation will not be able to abandon their traditions when truth is finally revealed. However, there will be individuals who will abandon the old and grasp the new because they

love truth. If we exalt religion and our longstanding traditions above the clearest presentation and evidences of God's truth, is that blasphemy? (Mark 7:7) However, giving up a "comfortable" church family for the isolation that often follows a new understanding of God's Word can be a very large obstacle. Incidentally, this was the same obstacle that hindered Nicodemus' interest in Jesus for several years. (John 3)

## **2. Revelation Depends on Daniel**

The book of Revelation is a continuation of the book of Daniel. If the book of Daniel is not properly understood, the book of Revelation cannot be correctly understood either. These two books produce one integrated story written by two men who lived about seven hundred years apart. Because God designed the visions given to Daniel and John, they are in perfect harmony and, together, produce a matrix of data which positions the timing of each prophetic event. This matrix spans more than 3,500 years and includes all the prophetic elements found in Daniel and Revelation. Some elements in Revelation require the timing established in Daniel to make sense, and the opposite is also true. The story that unfolds from both books is comprehensive, and it takes diligence, time and determination to mentally surround all of the parts and pieces. Unfortunately, this prerequisite is a serious obstacle for many people who are too busy to study God's Word.

## **3. Five Essential Bible Doctrines**

The books of Daniel and Revelation require an understanding of five essential Bible doctrines (the five **S**'s) shown below:

1. Salvation through faith in Christ
2. The **S**tate of man in death
3. The **S**econd Coming
4. God's seventh day **S**abbath
5. God's use of parallel **S**anctuaries or temples

Notice how these doctrines contribute to Revelation's story. First, the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus explains how a numberless multitude of people, coming from every culture, religion, nation and language, will be saved during the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 7:9-14) Second, the doctrine of soul sleep explains the necessity of two resurrections – the resurrection of the righteous will occur at the Second Coming and the resurrection of the wicked will occur at the end of the thousand years. Since people do not go to Heaven or Hell at the time of



death, the doctrine of parallel temples explains why and when the judgment of mankind occurs. The judgment of the dead began in 1844 and the judgment of the living will begin with the commencement of the Great Tribulation. The perpetuity of the Ten Commandments, particularly the fourth commandment, explains, in part, how the world will be trapped in a conflict over worship during the Great Tribulation. The laws of Babylon and the Antichrist will oppose the law of God. The conflict over worship will separate the people of Earth. One group will choose to obey God's commandments, while the other group will choose to obey the laws of Babylon and the devil.

Finally, the comprehensive doctrine of the Second Coming merges apocalyptic prophecy into a grand schematic revealing God's plan to terminate the problem of sin. Since most of Christianity rejects one or more of these five essential doctrines, most Christians struggle to understand the intended meaning of Daniel or Revelation. This is most unfortunate because the five essential doctrines explain "why" God will do what He has to do, and apocalyptic prophecy reveals "how" and "when" God will do all that He has to do.

God's Word is so vast and man is so finite. Even though the book of Revelation contains a mere 617 sentences, it speaks volumes. Contrary to what many people think, the book of Revelation is not concentrated on the end of the world! Instead, *the book of Revelation is focused on the revealing of Jesus Christ and His termination of the sin problem.* The book of Revelation describes an intricate process that climaxes with the glorious disclosure that Jesus Christ has the *same* authority, power and prerogatives as God the Father. This is why the last book in the Bible is named, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 1:1)

It is ironic that many people call this book by its shortened name, "Revelation," or "Revelations," without realizing that it predicts the *revealing* of Jesus. Most Christians associate the book of Revelation with the Antichrist or mysterious beasts rather than the Lamb of God. This perception will change for many people during the Great Tribulation. Man's great need of Jesus will become evident during the Great Tribulation. The good news, beaming from the book of Revelation, is that we have an Almighty Savior in Jesus if we are willing to love Him and submit to His authority. The bad news is that we have an omnipotent enemy in Jesus Christ if we cling to falsehood and insist on rebelling against Him. For this reason, the book of Revelation describes Jesus as a lamb and a lion. When He appears in glory, the righteous will see Him as "a lamb" slain from the foundation of the world, and the wicked will see "a lion" from the tribe of Judah.

**Five Types of Prophecy in the Bible**

It is important to know that the Bible contains five or more distinct types of prophecy and each type of prophecy has unique rules of interpretation. When interpreting Bible prophecy, we must use appropriate rules of interpretation for each type of prophecy. If flawed rules or the wrong set of rules are used to interpret prophecy, flawed conclusions will be the result. According to Webster, the word apocalypse means “any remarkable revelation.” This is why the last book of the Bible is named *Apocalypse* in the Greek language. The prophecies in Daniel and Revelation are unique from all other prophecies in the Bible. Consider these five types of prophecy:

**1. Messianic prophecies:** These prophecies concern the appearing and ministry of Jesus in either His first or second advent. Some scholars say there are more than 450 Messianic statements or prophecies in the Bible. Here are two examples of Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament: Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. Here are three examples of Messianic prophecies in the New Testament: John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Matthew 26:64.

**2. Judaic prophecies:** These prophecies were given to the biological offspring of Abraham. When God renewed His covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai, He promised to send blessings *or* curses depending on Israel’s faithfulness to the terms and conditions stipulated in the covenant. (Exodus 19, Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28) This is a point which many Christians often overlook, even though the Bible clearly states the promise contains the possibility of blessings, as well as curses. Most of the wonderful things God promised to Israel were not fulfilled because Israel repeatedly violated their covenant. Therefore, God implemented the curses instead of the blessings He had promised. (Daniel 9; Hebrews 3:19; Romans 9-11) After the Jews rejected Jesus (John 1, Matthew 23), God *redefined* the nation of Israel. Believers in Christ became the “seed” (Greek: *sperma*) of Abraham – the twelve tribes. (Ephesians 2, Galatians 3:28, 29, James 1:1, 2:1) Judaic prophecies were abandoned in accordance with the terms and conditions of the covenant. Judaic prophecies are not to be confused with the *unconditional* promises given to Abraham. (Genesis 15-17) Everything promised to Abraham will be fulfilled to the *redefined* seed of Abraham. (Ephesians 2; Galatians 3, 4; Romans 11; Hebrews 11; Revelation 7:9-11)

**3. Day of the Lord prophecies:** These prophecies are numerous and are scattered throughout Scripture. Ultimately, these prophecies predict the triumph of God and/or the vindication of His people. Elements within these prophecies are general enough that we can see parallels between

them at different times in human history. Many Bible students (and scholars) succumb to the temptation of applying ancient “Day of the Lord” prophecies to modern settings. For example, Isaiah 24 and Ezekiel 7 are “Day of the Lord” prophecies that would have been fulfilled *if* Israel had been faithful to God (what I call “Plan A”). These prophecies did not happen because Israel rejected God and God has implemented a new covenant (what I call “Plan B”). However, there are direct parallels between ancient “Day of the Lord” prophecies and modern “Day of the Lord” prophecies. It is important to keep “Plan A” and “Plan B” prophecies separate and distinct. For example, Matthew 24 is a “Day of the Lord” prophecy. This prophecy contains predictions about the end of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Plan A) and the end of the world (Plan B). It is important to notice that some specifications in Matthew 24 concern the end of Jerusalem and other specifications apply to the end of the world. A Bible student must be careful when studying these types of prophecies to be sure the specifications are assigned to the right time period. In other words, details concerning the end of the world do not belong to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. “Day of the Lord” prophecies are noted for their ominous warnings and God’s vindication over evil through warfare.

**4. Local prophecies:** Local prophecies apply to specific people, places and times. For example, the prophecy concerning Nineveh (Jonah 1) is a local prophecy. Local prophecies require a messenger to explain or proclaim the prophecy. In the case of Nineveh, Jonah was the messenger. Before the flood, Noah was the local messenger. At the time of the First Advent, John the Baptist was the local messenger. Even though the messages of local prophets belong to a specific time and place, timeless principles sustain their value. God is constant and the history of local prophecies offer important parallels that we will observe as we approach the end of Earth’s history. Jesus compared the days of Noah with the end of the world saying, **“As it was in the days of Noah so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”** (Matthew 24:37)

**5. Apocalyptic prophecies:** The apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are chronological prophecies that outline a sequence of events that occur over the course of time. Apocalyptic prophecy is identified by the presence of a beginning and an ending point in time. Both the fulfillment and the sequence of events in this type of prophecy are unconditional. The first example of this type of prophecy can be found in Daniel 2. Nebuchadnezzar’s vision outlines a sequence of kingdoms which rise to power in the order predicted. Sometimes, the sequence or structure of apocalyptic prophecy is defined by numeric order. For example, the second trumpet in Revelation 8 occurs *after* the first

trumpet. The critical point is that chronological order is *always* maintained in apocalyptic prophecy, otherwise no one could determine the order of events.

### **Distinctive Treatment Necessary**

It must be emphasized again that each type of prophecy deserves distinctive treatment. Mixing and/or merging rules of interpretation will reduce the interpretation of Bible prophecy to confusion. The Bible student must identify *the type* of prophecy under investigation before he can apply the right set of rules and reach the intended conclusion.

### **The Difference between Prophetic Truth and Prophetic Faith**

There is an important difference between prophetic truth and prophetic faith. Prophetic truth looks to the past. Prophetic truth identifies those prophecies or elements of prophecy that qualify as fulfillments. Prophetic faith, on the other hand, looks to the future. Prophetic faith anticipates the fulfillment of prophecy. Since no one can prove that a prophetic conclusion about the future will be accurate, our prophetic faith should be carefully built on valid rules of interpretation that demonstrate perfect fulfillment in ages past. In other words, a valid set of rules will position and interpret the prophetic elements of the past and the future with the same precision.

### **What Is a Prophetic Fulfillment?**

The second rule of apocalyptic prophecy states, “A *fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy occurs when all of the specifications within that prophecy are met. This includes the order of events outlined in the prophecy.*” Every detail within a prophecy must be satisfied before a prophecy can be declared fulfilled. Because of the first rule, the chronological order of the prophecy must also be satisfied. For example, some people claim that the fourth trumpet of Revelation 8 has already been fulfilled. If this claim were true, they would have to demonstrate that *all* of the specifications of the fourth trumpet have been met, and they would have to demonstrate the fulfillment of the first three trumpets as well.

### **What Does “Soon” or “Near” Mean?**

Some people argue that God’s sovereignty is limited if certain prophetic events *have to occur* before Jesus can return. This argument is without merit when we understand that God Himself established a course of events that will lead up to the Second Coming. The Father set the limits of time for the duration of sin according to His own authority before the

world began. (Acts 1:7) God has revealed His plan and schedule through apocalyptic prophecy, and He will fulfill all that He has predetermined. (Isaiah 46:11)

Some people claim the urgency expressed by Bible prophets should not be taken seriously. They say, “Words like *near* and *soon* should be understood from God’s perspective, because with God, a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day.” (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8) For the following reasons, this use of God’s Word is faulty and these texts do not support the ambivalent meaning which is imposed on them. Think about this: *God deliberately embedded eighteen time periods in the seventeen prophecies of Daniel and Revelation so that students of prophecy might understand the timing of His plans!* Why would God use words like *near* and *soon* if He did not mean what He said? The words “soon” and “near” have to be understood within their intended context; that is, when the time for prophetic fulfillment arrives, words mean what they say. The problem, though, is that Bible writers shared an interesting phenomenon. They consistently interpreted their visions as though the end of the world was going to occur in their day! As you read these nine texts, notice **when** these words were written and their choice of words:

1. (Obadiah 1:15) “The day of the Lord **is near** for all nations.” (840 B.C.)
2. (Joel 2:1) “Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It **is close** at hand.” (820 B.C.)
3. (Isaiah 13:6) “Wail, for the day of the Lord **is near**; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.” (730 B.C.)
4. (Ezekiel 30:3) “For the day **is near**, the day of the Lord **is near** – a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.” (580 B.C.)
5. (Zephaniah 1:14) “The great day of the Lord **is near** – **near and coming quickly**.” (630 B.C.)
6. (1 Corinthians 7:29) “What I mean, brothers, is that the **time is short**. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none.” (A.D. 50)
7. (1 Peter 4:7) “The end of all things **is near**. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.” (A.D. 60)
8. (James 5:8) “You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming **is near**.” (A.D. 60)

9. (1 John 2:18) “Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know **it is the last hour.**” (A.D. 90)

Because thousands of years have passed since these words were written, should we say these Bible writers were wrong with respect to timing? Yes, they were premature. (Review item number six and smile!) Of course, we should neither lose faith in the prophets nor should we throw out the Bible, because these faithful Bible writers did not know that thousands of years would come and go before Jesus would return to Earth. In fairness to them, we must remember that their understanding of God’s plan was incomplete because the book of Daniel had not been written (in some cases) or unsealed (in others). Paul died before the book of Revelation was given and he knew there was more to God’s plan than what had been shown. Therefore Paul wrote, **“For we know in part and we prophesy in part.”** (1 Corinthians 13:9) The issue of timing is not hard to sort out if you properly understand the process of inspiration. God revealed selected scenes to His prophets through the ages which they *merged* into the reality of their day and time. Therefore, they all thought the end of the age was near. None of the disciples thought Jesus would wait two thousand years to return to Earth. Peter really believed what he wrote, “The end of all things is near.” Even the prophet Daniel could not know the timing of the events he was shown.

How can a person claim the coming of Jesus is *near* if he does not know the amount of remaining time? Recorded history has shown that twenty-one civilizations have come and gone. Just because our world is in a big mess today with immorality, wars, natural disasters and hatred, does not prove that Jesus is coming soon. These events have happened before. *One element conclusively proves* the coming of Jesus is near. When the book of Daniel is unsealed, the final generation will have proof that the end has come *before* the Great Tribulation begins! Of course, when the Great Tribulation begins, many people will conclude the end has come. Should we eagerly anticipate the end? Yes! The end of sin and beginning of eternal life is the insatiable desire of every “born again” heart! We are going home, and the books of Daniel and Revelation tell us when and how. God has a predetermined timetable for planet Earth. Outside of apocalyptic prophecy, there is no possible way to know the details of this timetable or when the end of time will occur.

### **Revelation’s Matrix Expands Daniel’s Matrix**



In our study on Daniel, we learned how the prophecies of Daniel harmoniously “stack” on top of each other and form a matrix. As the stack grows taller – prophecy by prophecy – the story becomes more specific and less abstract. God uses repetition and enlargement to tell a very big story with very few words. No prophecy in Daniel or Revelation tells a complete story. *No prophecy stands alone.* However, if they are properly “stacked” on top of each other, the prophecies tell a comprehensive and compelling story that flows from a unified matrix. Because there is a deliberate “stacking” order to the prophecies of Daniel, each prophecy contributes something important to the bigger picture. This feature makes the study of prophecy difficult at first. You almost have to understand the whole story before you can appreciate the fascinating details of each part.

By putting the prophecies of Daniel in a matrix, God does not have to repeat foundational elements in succeeding prophecies once they have been introduced. This is why the books of Daniel and Revelation are so short. The prophecies of Revelation “stack” on top of the matrix which began in Daniel. Since most prophetic expositors do not understand this matrix and fail to comprehend the rules that are sealed until the time of the end, they cannot see “the forest” for trying to arrange “the trees.” The matrix resolves a number of issues by providing some *forcible* organization for all of the information.

I call it “forcible organization” because the rules organize the data. It is like organizing furniture in a room. The big pieces of furniture have to be put in their places *first*. If this simple point is overlooked, the mover could be forced to rearrange the entire room, or dispose the larger items that will not fit. (I know this from firsthand experience.) In a similar way, the matrix in Daniel and Revelation forces large events (like kingdoms and large time periods) and small events (like the appearing of the 144,000) to be placed in proper order. The rules produce an arrangement of big parts and little parts that would be otherwise impossible to determine.

The beauty of this approach is that the four rules force us to organize the prophetic elements of each prophecy in chronological order. Even though our understanding of some elements may be foggy or incomplete, we do know the order in which they occur. As we place the pieces in their stated order, the matrix aligns prophetic elements in the stack above with elements in the stack below. Soon, a comprehensive picture forms because the matrix forces all of the pieces into their proper places. Truth is always truth and when valid rules of interpretation are used, everyone can reproduce this process of discovery, regardless of religious bias.

Unfortunately, millions of Christians do not know about the five essential doctrines, the necessity of rules of interpretation, or the historical matrix which the book of Daniel produces. Consequently, they are easily misled by fuzzy logic. Preachers present sweet sounding prophetic interpretations which the Bible does not teach, and laymen cannot determine if their words are true or false. If my assessment of Bible prophecy is correct, the world will experience a rude awakening very soon. The Great Tribulation crisis will suddenly commence and most of the Christian world (not to mention the non-Christian world) will be overwhelmingly surprised. My observation is that the fulfillment of Daniel and Revelation will be very different than what most Christians expect.

### **A Brief Summary of Revelation**

Before we examine the twelve prophecies of Revelation, a brief overview of the book of Revelation might be helpful. Of course, this summary may be different than anything you have read before, so please regard this summary as a hint of where this study on Revelation will lead us.

### **The Seven Churches**

The messages sent to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are not apocalyptic prophecies because they do not conform to the four rules governing apocalyptic prophecy. For example, there is no beginning point in time or ending point in time for each church in Asia Minor. Chronological order cannot be imposed on the seven churches because all seven churches existed simultaneously. Nothing in Revelation 2 or 3 indicates that each message covers a phase or a time period in Christian history during the past two thousand years. In fact, textual evidence in Revelation 1-3 indicates the opposite. *All seven churches existed at the time John received the vision and there are specific statements given to each church concerning their particular situation at that time.* The Lord singled out seven of the churches in Asia Minor (there were more than seven Christian churches in existence at that time) because *these* seven churches faced issues and problems that would afflict all Christian churches until the end of time. The number seven indicates wholeness or completeness, and the principles underlying the messages to the seven churches are timeless and applicable in each generation.

The Lord told John to write everything he was shown and send it to the seven churches in Asia Minor for at least two reasons. First, Jesus wanted His followers to know that even though He had been in Heaven for sixty years, He closely watched over His churches on Earth. He



wants Christians in every age to know that He is very much alive and intimately concerned about us even though we cannot see Him. Second, Jesus directed John to send a copy of the Revelation vision to the seven churches to insure this vision would be preserved for centuries to come. Whether John made seven copies of the vision or whether each church made a copy for itself is unknown. The messages to the seven churches and the vision of Revelation have been preserved for about two thousand years. The messages to the seven churches require spiritual discernment. Those who have ears to hear what the Holy Spirit says can discern their true condition and position before the Lord by examining the awesome messages sent to the seven churches.<sup>1</sup>

### The Seven Seals

The story of the mysterious book sealed with seven seals is the first apocalyptic prophecy in Revelation. This story not only “stacks” on top of the matrix established by Daniel with perfect harmony, but it also adds new information to the matrix which other prophecies in Revelation will use. Revelation 4-6 is to the book of Revelation what Daniel 2 is to the book of Daniel. Both prophecies establish a foundational sequence of events on which other prophecies build. It is also important to know that Revelation 4-6 amplifies certain events recorded in Daniel 7-9.

The story of the seven seals has several purposes. First, it establishes order. Each seal is opened in chronological order. The first seal was broken in 1798 and the last seal will be broken at the end of the millennium. Next, the information written in the book sealed with seven seals ultimately resolves two problems that began *before* Earth was created. I conclude, from the evidence presented in Revelation and elsewhere in the Bible, that sin began with two clever arguments which Lucifer brought against the Father and the Son. First, Lucifer claimed that God was not a God of love. Second, He claimed that God used His incredible powers (omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence) to selfishly maintain control over the universe. Lucifer claimed that God did not offer freedom to His subjects. Lucifer argued that God loved authority and power, and Lucifer summed up God’s tyranny with this evil taunt to the angels, “It’s obey God and live or disobey God and die.”

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<sup>1</sup> For a careful study and analysis of the seven messages sent to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, examine the November, 2002 through May, 2003 back issues of *Day Star*. These seven studies can be viewed or freely downloaded from our web site: [www.wake-up.org](http://www.wake-up.org). We also have these seven studies prepared in printed form if you wish to order them.

We should not underestimate the power or sophistry of the devil's arguments, because they deceived a third of Heaven's sinless angels. When the seventh seal is opened, and the contents of the book are exposed, God will prove that Lucifer's first assertion was nothing but a malicious lie. Moreover, God will absolutely prove that Lucifer's arguments were cleverly disguised to hide his evil motives to gain what belonged to Jesus. The second problem, which the unsealed book will resolve, centers around the humility of God. When the book is unsealed at the end of the thousand years, the universe will finally understand that, if necessary, Jesus was willing to lay down His life forever, so fallen man might have the possibility of salvation.

Because the Father foreknew the rise of sin and the hatred that Lucifer would eventually have for Christ and His followers, He created a simple, but profound, means to dispel all of Lucifer's lies *before* Lucifer was created. He wrote a complete history of life in a book which contains a complete account of every created being. If this book were opened prematurely, the argument could be made that God manipulated events to occur according to His will. So, the Father sealed the book so that nothing in it could be exposed or changed. Then, the Father commissioned certain angels to serve as recording angels. These angels record everything that is said and done by every living being. In the end, the sealed book will be opened and compared with the records of the angels. Amazingly, the two records will prove to be identical! This astounding evidence will exonerate God of all of Lucifer's charges. God will prove that He foreknew the outcome of everything before anything was created. More importantly, God will prove that He did not manipulate the decision making power of anyone. His creatures have the power of choice and they are free to obey or rebel against His authority. Last, God will prove that He does not use His awesome powers of omniscience, omnipotence or omnipresence to maintain the throne. Rather, He uses these unlimited powers to insure that the rule of love is eternally enduring. Faith in God always makes perfect sense when seen in reverse.

### **The 144,000**

The opening of the fourth seal marks the commencement of the Great Tribulation. Just prior to the global earthquake that marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation, God will select 144,000 people on Earth to do a special work for Him. God will choose and empower these people, like Noah before the flood, and Moses at the time of the Exodus, to speak for Him. These people will be located all over the world and they will be selected from every religious group. In an effort to save the

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maximum number of people, God will have “believing brothers” speaking to their biological brothers. The awesome power of God will rest on the 144,000, and even though they will have little or no communication with each other, they will proclaim the same terms and conditions of salvation in the clearest of words. Contrary to what most Christians believe, these people will not be biological Jews that suddenly convert to Christianity after a supposedly secret rapture. According to Scripture, these people will be Jews in God’s sight – that is, according to the *redefinition* of Israel that occurs through Jesus. (James 1:1; 2:1; Romans 2:28, 29; Ephesians 2; Galatians 3; Romans 9-11; Revelation 2:9; 3:9) A *numberless* multitude from all kindreds, tongues and nations will hear the 144,000, receive their testimony and be saved.

### The Seven Trumpets

The Great Tribulation will begin with a global earthquake followed by four civilization threatening judgments in quick succession. (Revelation 8:2-12) A quarter of Earth’s population will perish within a few weeks. These horrific events will stun and overwhelm the survivors. Because the current religions of our world are highly antagonistic towards each other, it is almost impossible for people from different religions to discuss the subject of God. The Moslem cannot understand the Christian’s belief in Jesus. The Jew cannot understand the Catholic mass or the need for Mary’s intercession. The Protestant does not understand the enlightenment of Buddhism, etc. We live in a world that has many views about God, and it is impossible for one man to prove the superiority of his God over that of another man. To make matters worse, there is great diversity of thought about God within each religious system, and this keeps the world deeply fractured. Can a Catholic, Moslem, Jew, Mormon and Baptist worship the same God *together*? If so, what would the properties of such a God be?

Jesus will soon awaken the world to the reality of His sovereign authority and dominion as well as the authority of His 144,000 servants (both men and women). He will shatter the religious views of the world with a series of awesome judgments including a meteoric firestorm of burning hail that burns up a third of the trees on Earth, and two civilization threatening asteroid impacts causing darkness to cover the world for a period of time. These four judgments will destroy more than 1.5 billion people in a few weeks. By showing His authority with overwhelming destructive force, Jesus will gain man’s full attention and temporarily subdue the ongoing hatred, conflicts and wars between nations. When Jesus initiates these four judgments, everyone on Earth will realize that Almighty God is angry. The seven trumpets of

Revelation are seven judgments of mercy that will befall Earth, so that Jesus may gain our attention and speak to us with one voice through His servants. The 144,000 will present the terms and conditions for salvation; and the gospel of Christ will separate the people of Earth into two camps – the sheep and the goats.

### **The Two Witnesses**

The Two Witnesses are the Bible and the Holy Spirit, and the 144,000 will be the arms and legs of the Two Witnesses. The 144,000 will present Bible truth, and the Holy Spirit will convict honest-hearted people (in every religion) with the truthfulness of that testimony. The Holy Spirit will do everything possible to move people into submission to the will of Jesus; even empowering the 144,000 to perform miracles. They will present three simple testing truths from the Bible and these testing truths (found in Revelation 14:6-12) will separate those who listen to God's Spirit from those who do not. Eventually, the *influence* of the Bible and the Holy Spirit will be killed during the Great Tribulation!

Jesus said the Father accepts the worship of those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24) In other words, God accepts the worship of those who humbly submit to His demands. If our will is more important than His will, then we have become an enemy of God (anti-Christ), because our Creator has a higher claim over us than we have over ourselves! When we become willing to go, to be and to do all that God demands, Jesus said it is like being born again. (John 3) The Holy Spirit does His best to bring us into perfect harmony with God's commands and will.

Because Jesus speaks for God, He is called "the Word of God." (John 1:1) People who worship Jesus in spirit and truth must be open-hearted (to the Spirit) and open-minded (to the advancement of truth) so they can mature in Christ. When a person rejects the Spirit and refuses to accept the clearest evidences of truth, God can do nothing else to save that person. By the time the seventh trumpet sounds, the influence of the Two Witnesses will be terminated. Their work will end because everyone will have made their decision for Lucifer or Christ. Many people, like one-third of the angels in Heaven, will choose to follow Lucifer and believe his lies. Consequently, the Two Witnesses, the Holy Spirit and the written Word (the Bible), will condemn them to death. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Jeremiah 7:28, 9:5; Daniel 8:12; 2 John 1:1, 2)

In Revelation 11, the two olive trees and two candlesticks (the Holy Spirit and the Bible) are personified as two *human* witnesses who will speak to the whole world. Personification is used in Revelation 11 for an

important reason. In Bible times, a person could not be put to death on the testimony of one witness; a minimum of two witnesses was required. (Deuteronomy 17:6; Hebrews 10:28) During the Great Tribulation, the 144,000 will forcefully and clearly present the demand to worship God; every person who refuses to submit to the influence of the Holy Spirit and obey God's fourth commandment will be condemned to die, because of defiance. No person will perish because he refuses to listen to one of God's 144,000 servants. People who reject the Holy Spirit and God's truth will commit the unpardonable sin and be condemned because of open rebellion. (Matthew 12:31) Many people think the Two Witnesses will be Moses and Elijah, but Revelation's story does not have 144,002 spokespersons for God. Revelation's story is about two divine witnesses from God (*which cannot fail*) empowering 144,000 servants.

### **The Rise and Fall of Babylon**

After the "shock and awe" of the first four trumpets occur, chaos and lawlessness will follow. The mayhem that occurred after the war between the United States and Iraq in 2003 is a miniature example of this coming upheaval. Political leaders of all nations will immediately respond to God's overwhelming destruction by imposing martial law. Fear and anxiety will rule the day. Religious leaders will declare these events as "Acts of God," and they will move quickly to establish a coalition of religious and political authorities to discuss developments and options. The consuming issue will be the question of how to appease God so that His judgments will cease. Because every government will be on the brink of collapse as a result of God's judgments, religious and political leaders from all over the world will agree that a "crisis government" is necessary to deal with God's demands. The Bible calls this coming crisis government, "Babylon."

Ironically, Babylon will immediately attempt to appease God by imposing "sin-less" laws. These laws will, at first, prohibit sinful behaviors that were previously permissible. Eventually, laws mandating the worship of God will be imposed, but the diversity of humanity will prove to be an insurmountable obstacle! How should God be worshiped? Which religion has the truth about God? Every religion has a different view of God's requirements. To resolve this sticky problem, laws will be enforced in each nation that reflect the majority view of God. In other words, in countries where Catholicism is dominant, laws mandating the worship of God will favor Catholic theology. In countries where Islam is dominant, laws mandating the worship of God will favor Islamic theology. Because of the overwhelming destruction of the first four trumpets, in the United States, the Bill of

Rights and constitutional freedoms will be suspended. The laws of Babylon will stand in direct opposition to the fourth commandment and the juxtaposition of conflicting laws will put the people of Earth in an agonizing situation. If people obey God, the authorities will punish them for violating the laws of Babylon. If people obey the authorities of Babylon, God will punish them for violating His law. Babylon will severely persecute the saints for 42 months and ultimately, Jesus will destroy Babylon at the Second Coming.

### **The Appearing of the Antichrist**

About 890 days after the Great Tribulation begins (or two-thirds of the way through the 1,335 days of the Great Tribulation), the fifth trumpet will occur. This event will prove to be awesome. Lucifer will be allowed to physically appear on Earth. The devil will be allowed to leave the spirit realm to physically appear before human beings to bring sin's drama to a close. Lucifer is the dreaded Antichrist. He will masquerade as Almighty God. He will perform great signs and wonders, and demand the worship that belongs only to God. Billions of wicked people will believe, on the basis of his miracles and signs, that he is really God. To ration scarce resources during the Great Tribulation, the devil will divide the people of Earth into groups of one thousand. Then, during the sixth trumpet, demons will kill a third of mankind to silence opposition against Lucifer, and he will assume absolute control of Earth. In order to buy and sell, the remaining two-thirds of the wicked will consent to wearing a tattoo on their right hand showing the number 666. This number, indicates the bearer belongs to the two-thirds who were spared from death (666 is two-thirds of 1,000). The devil will then exalt himself as King of kings and Lord of lords, only to be destroyed by THE true King of kings and Lord of lords at the Second Coming.

### **The Seven Last Plagues**

The seventh trumpet marks the close of the gospel call. The influence of the Two Witnesses will be terminated at the end of 1,260 days. By that time, most, if not all, of the 144,000 will have been slain. Jesus' offer of salvation will end and the seven last plagues will begin. The seven bowls will fall exclusively on people who have the mark of the beast. The seven last plagues will last for seventy days. Seven judgments will be poured out on the wicked for two reasons. First, Jesus intends to avenge the suffering of His innocent saints. He will punish the wicked for the cruel treatment and the murder of His saints during the seven trumpets. Second, Jesus will display the wrath of God against obstinate rebellion so that through eternity, everyone will know how God's wrath against

defiance is demonstrated.

### **The Second Coming**

When Jesus appears, three events happen in quick succession. First, the Lord will resurrect the righteous dead. Second, the living righteous will be caught up with the resurrected saints to meet the Lord in the air while the wicked watch. Last, Jesus will cast the devil and his regime into a lake of fire. Then, Jesus will speak a powerful command and the wicked people of Earth will die. Ironically, the same voice that raised the righteous dead to life will put the wicked to death.

### **The 1,000 Years**

During the 1,000 years, the saints will be taken to their home in Heaven to reign with Christ. (John 14:1-3) Reigning with Christ means the saints will share Christ's authority. They will have authority, *along with Jesus*, to determine the amount of restitution (suffering) that each wicked person must provide. The wicked will then be annihilated in the purifying fire that will fall on Earth at the end of the thousand years. In other words, justice will be completely extracted from every wicked person before he is allowed to die. This is the golden rule: As you did unto others, it will be done unto you. (Leviticus 24:19-22; Deuteronomy 19:18-21)

### **A New Heaven and a New Earth**

At the end of the 1,000 years, the saints will descend to Earth in the Holy City, New Jerusalem. The wicked will be resurrected to see their Maker and face their punishment which was determined by the saints during the thousand years. The seventh seal will be broken and the contents of the Book of Life will be presented for everyone to see. A world of many languages and religions will see that Jesus Christ is Almighty God just like the Father. The lies of the devil will finally be proven false. The defiance of the wicked will be seen for what it really is, selfishness. Jesus will see to it that everyone understands why He judged them as He did. When the wicked discover there is no hope for recovery, the devil will arouse them to make war against Jesus and His holy city. Jesus will then call fire down from Heaven and eventually, the wicked will be annihilated. Fire will purify Earth of sin. When the greatest sinner (Lucifer) finishes suffering, Jesus will create a new Heaven and a new Earth and the saints will live happily ever after.

### **Examine Chart 9.1**



I have prepared a chart to give you a general picture of what this commentary on Revelation will discuss. Look at Chart 9.1 and notice the relationships between each apocalyptic prophecy with the layers above and below it. The matrix helps to explain elements that could not otherwise be understood. Once you understand the forced organization which the matrix produces, then this one picture is worth more than a thousand words of explanation.

Since space is limited when diagraming this much information, Chart 9.1 is not drawn to scale. Nevertheless, I have tried to vertically align all of the elements within the matrix. According to the first rule of apocalyptic interpretation, each prophecy is in its order, and each prophecy harmoniously aligns with those prophecies above or below it. Naturally, this chart cannot include everything mentioned in Daniel or Revelation, but it does show how the larger pieces of prophecy align with respect to timing as required by the four rules of interpretation.

There are three things in particular I would like for you to find. First, locate the word “Today.” It is located in the top row. Now, look down to the middle of the chart and notice that the opening of the fourth seal and the commencement of the Great Tribulation is about to begin!

(Revelation 4-6) Next, notice how the Great Tribulation begins with the breaking of the fourth seal and ends with the breaking of the sixth seal (the Second Coming). Last, notice that the stern faced king in Daniel 8, the King of the North in Daniel 11, the angel king of the Abyss in Revelation 9 (fifth trumpet), and the lamb-like beast of Revelation 13:11 are the *same* entity. In other words, the appearing of the Antichrist is presented in several prophecies so there can be no mistake about the timing or the identity of Lucifer.

Now that these introductory matters have been addressed, we will begin our study in Revelation by examining its first prophecy. Prophecy #1 begins with Revelation 4:1 and ends with Revelation 6:17. According to Rule One, the events in this prophecy occur in the order in which they are given. With the five essential doctrines, the four rules, and the matrix established in the book of Daniel, let us see what we can discover!



Revelation Expands Daniel's Matrix

Rev 16 7 Last Plagues	Today										1   2   3   4   5   6   7											
Rev 13:11 Antichrist Appears						Lamb- like Beast Appears																
Rev 13:1 Babylon						-----Persecutes Saints for 42 Months -----																
Rev 8-9 7 Trumpets						1 2 3 4		5 Lucifer Appears as God		6 Mark of the Beast		7										
Rev 7 144,000						Begin		Everlasting Gospel The Living Judged				End										
Rev 4-6 7 Seals				Jesus Found Worthy 1   2		3		The Great Tribulation -- 1335 Days														
								4				5						6				
Dan 10- 12 K ing of the North								K ing of the North		Martyrdom of the Saints			M ichael Stands Up									
Dan 8 Stern- faced K ing	---- 2,300 Years End ----					1844				Horn Power		Rules over Earth Takes the Daily Away from Jesus					Destroyed but not by Human Power					
Dan 7 Beasts	Rome The Monster Beast Falls in AD 476		538 Little Horn Rises		1798 Little Horn Injured		Court Seated, Cleansing Begins									Beasts Burned Up by Fire						
Dan 2 Image	Legs of Iron		Feet										Toes			Rock						



# Chapter 10

## Revelation 4-6

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**“...When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,  
your eyes saw my unformed body. *All the days ordained  
for me were written in your book before one of them came  
to be.* How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How  
vast is the sum of them!”**

– Psalm 139:15-17, emphasis mine

The first prophecy in Revelation is quite a challenge to understand because several *large* subjects dovetail into this prophecy. To make this presentation easier to understand, I have divided it into four segments: The first segment will deal with motive – why did God write a book before He began creating life? The second segment will examine why the book had to be sealed with seven seals. The third segment will examine the timing of Revelation 4-6, and the last segment will deal with the meaning of each seal.

### Segment I

#### Why Did God Write the Book?

##### The Problem of Sin

You may ask, how can an omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipotent (all-powerful) God have a problem? It all started when Lucifer, the brightest and highest of God’s created beings, exercised *his God given right* to rebel against his Maker. Lucifer and the angels (like Adam and Eve) were created with a pure heart, having a propensity for righteousness. There was no taint of selfishness or rebellion in them. At some point in time, Lucifer *chose*, of his own free will, to rebel against Christ’s authority. Lucifer’s actions created a chain of problems, which ultimately introduced rebellion to the universe. During a lengthy period of grace, God tried to get Lucifer to repent, but he refused. When Lucifer and his followers became hopelessly defiant, God cast them out of His house. God did not destroy them because He knew His largest problem was not the presence of sin in His universe. *From the beginning, God’s greatest problem has been preventing sin and rebellion from rising a second time.*

Think about this. If you were God, how would you *prevent* sin from occurring again among children that you gave the *right* to rebel? Because our “Heavenly Father knows best,” He allowed Lucifer and his followers to live for a while so that angels and humans alike could understand the nature and properties of sin as it developed. Because God is omniscient and omnipotent and His character is love, He has devised an elegant process that, in the end, will constantly thwart the rise of sin throughout the endless ages of eternity. In simple terms, the process works like this: At the end of sin’s drama, God will *repopulate* Heaven with people who had sinful natures, but *chose* to submit to His authority. The angels who chose to rebel against God with Lucifer will be replaced by ex-sinners who overcame the rebellion of sin. By doing this, God will have a host of seasoned witnesses – elevated to the stature of “kings and priests” – who will be able to resolve any issues that might lead to rebellion in the future! (Revelation 1:6) How ingenious! The seasoned experiences of ex-sinners will forever keep the universe free of sin! God knows that the price for sin has been too great to ever have it rise again.

### **Think This Through**

The Bible says that God is love. (1 John 4:8) Because He is a loving God, He gave each of His children the most precious gift that a Creator could offer a created being – the power of choice. If we so choose, we can rebel against our Creator. Of course, all choices have consequences, and rebellion against God’s laws and authority are not exempt; they too have serious consequences. In the beginning, only God had the knowledge of good and evil. This means the angels did not understand the consequences of sin. However, when the drama with sin is completed, the knowledge of good and evil will exist as an eternal verity (a highly exalted truth that will never fade) because everyone in God’s universe will clearly understand four matters:

1. God’s laws are designed for the benefit of His children. Because God knows the end from the beginning and He knows what laws are essential for eternal happiness, His laws are unchanging and nonnegotiable. God Himself is subject to His own changeless laws, even to the point of death.
2. There is no selfishness or self-seeking in God’s heart. The Father was willing to annihilate Jesus for our sins and Jesus was willing to cease to exist, if necessary, so that we could have eternal life.
3. The self-centered behavior of the sinful nature is not only self-destructive, it is corporately destructive. Rebellion exposes every child of God to injury or loss.

4. Because God will not impose His will on His children, the only way there can be a happy and harmonious universe after rebellion occurs is through a justifiable annihilation of those who *insist* on rebellion.

Because these four matters will be widely understood and highly exalted at the end of sin's drama, God will not be able to spare future rebels from immediate execution if sin rises again. Keep in mind that God did not destroy Lucifer and his followers, or Adam and Eve, at the time of their rebellion, because the knowledge of good and evil had not yet unfolded in the universe. However, after the four points listed above are widely known and proven to be true (at the end of sin's drama), God will not tolerate rebellion against "the righteous order" necessary for the happiness and benefit of His children. (Have you noticed in Genesis 2:17, that Adam and Eve were to be destroyed the same day they sinned? God relented because Jesus offered to die in their place. Jesus was willing to die for Adam and Eve because the guilty pair did not sin defiantly.)

This is a key point: God does not destroy sinners because He is offended. Rather, God destroys those who insist on rebellion because rebellion hurts everyone. Annihilation is the only way to terminate the horrible consequences of sin. When the universe clearly understands the consequences of good and evil choices, sin's victims will prevent a second rise of sin forever. (Nahum 1:9; Matthew 12:31, 32)

Currently, God is resolving two problems. He is resolving the existing problem of sin, and He is resolving the problem of sin in such a way that His children will refuse to participate in sin again! How wonderful! When the current drama with sin ends, it will become obvious that only an omniscient God of love and wisdom could so masterfully resolve both problems.

### **Foreknowledge at Work**

The subject of God's foreknowledge can be hard to understand because God's behavior is not like our behavior. (Isaiah 55:8, 9) God is love. This means that He has no selfishness in Him. God does not manipulate His creatures on the basis of His foreknowledge. He has given us the power of choice and He *always* treats us on the basis of love even though we do make choices that are contrary to His will. Fallen human beings have selfish hearts. If we had the gift of foreknowledge, we would use this incredible power for selfish purposes. We would manipulate others to our satisfaction and we would manipulate the outcome of life to protect ourselves and enhance our circumstances. In other words, if the gift of foreknowledge was mixed with human selfishness, the result would be

extraordinary manipulation of those around us. Consider the following illustration:

Let us assume that a recently married husband and wife have foreknowledge. Let us assume they intend to have a family of nine children. Since they have foreknowledge, they foreknow that their firstborn child will be a son which they will call “Louis,” and they know he will be born on August 10, 2004. Fifty years later, on Louis’ birthday, August 10, 2054, they know that Louis will start a heated argument and he will attempt to kill both parents that evening. Prior to his fiftieth birthday, this husband and wife know that Louis will attempt to steal their assets to support his reckless and indulgent lifestyle and his addiction to drugs. Because they have foreknowledge, the parents know that Louis will use lies to alienate the other siblings from them. To keep his true motives from being detected, Louis will try to convince his brothers and sisters that his parents are evil. Furthermore, he will claim they owe him money and are unwilling to meet their obligation. The parents foreknow that two of their children will sympathize with Louis and take sides with him. Even though they know these terrible events will unfold, they also know that during his first forty years of his life, Louis will be a wonderful, loveable son. In fact, of all the nine children, Louis will be their favorite. Since these parents know what the situation will be on Louis’ birthday in 2054, what should they do *right now* to protect themselves and their other offspring from Louis?

- A. Have no children.
- B. Have eight children, do not give birth to Louis.
- C. Abandon Louis immediately after he is born.
- D. Kill Louis before he turns forty.
- E. Kill Louis when he starts taking drugs.
- F. Kill Louis when he begins to tell lies to limit his influence on the other children.
- G. Write out the contents of you know is going to happen (foreknowledge) and seal it up before any child is born so that at the right time, your children and grandchildren can examine the whole story and determine the truth about Louis and his parents.

These seven options may sound ridiculous, but they have a serious parallel. God is all knowing and He foreknows everything in the past, present and future. Of course, some of these options were not viable options for a loving God, but they illustrate a range of considerations

that God faced before creating life. God foreknew that Lucifer, the first and highest of His created beings, would eventually choose to become His enemy. God foreknew the damage that Lucifer and his followers would cause in His house. God also foreknew that Adam and Eve would sin and that Earth would be filled with billions of rebellious people. (Isaiah 44:8; 46:10,11; Jeremiah 17:10; ) Given His heart of perfect love and foreknowledge, God looked at all the options and He chose the equivalent of option “G.” To better appreciate the problems that God faced before creating life, let us consider these seven options from God’s perspective:

**Option A:** Have no children. God rejected this option because He wanted to fill His huge house with a numberless group of happy children. (Isaiah 45:18) The presence of billions of angels and human beings in God’s universe proves this point. Each angel and human being is alive because God deliberately gave them life! Jesus, the Creator, must have thought, “Even though sin will occur someday, and I will have to die to redeem sinners, the gift of life is of greater value than *any* damage sin can cause.”

**Option B:** Do not create Lucifer. While this option may have solved the problem with Lucifer, it does not solve the underlying problem of sin. If God limited creation to beings who would remain obedient to His demands, then He could not be considered a God of love. Love is not about control. Love is about granting choice. Because God is love, He grants angels and mankind the power of choice. We can *choose* to rebel against Him or we can *choose* to love and obey Him – the choice is ours to make, not His to dictate. If God created beings that have no choice, love would be meaningless. God’s created beings would be mere robots. Therefore, leaving Lucifer (and any others who might rebel against His will) out of the creative process was not a viable option for God. If it were, do you think Jesus would have created Adam and Eve foreknowing the price He would have to pay for their sins? Do you think He would have created you and me? *Any manipulation of created beings for personal benefit is contrary to God’s character of love.*

The presence of sin in the universe proves three immutable things.

1. First, it proves that God grants the power of choice to His children. Lucifer and one-third of the angels could sin and they *chose* to sin. Adam and Eve could sin and they *chose* to sin. In both cases, sinning was an unnatural act. Before they fell, neither angels nor mankind possessed a predisposition toward sin. We were created in God’s image, after His likeness – having

a proclivity for right doing. God put a magnetism for right doing within the angels and mankind so that everyone in His universe would naturally live in harmony with the rules necessary for eternal happiness and joy. When the angels and mankind fell, we became predisposed to be rebellious and selfish toward God and His rules. Therefore, the presence of rebellion *proves* that God grants the power of choice to His creatures and some of His creatures have exercised their *God given right* by rebelling.

2. The second immutable truth that comes out of the drama of sin is that God has no self-seeking pride, arrogance or selfishness in His heart. God did not have to offer His Son to save mankind, He was not forced to do it. ("For God so loved the world that He gave . . .") He *chose* to offer man salvation through Jesus because Eve and Adam did not defiantly disobey their Creator. God would have gladly offered salvation to Lucifer and his angels, but they repeatedly and defiantly rejected God's appeals. When the Holy Spirit could not bring them to repentance, they passed the point of no return. There is a point in rejecting the Holy Spirit where submission to God's authority becomes impossible; Lucifer and the angels reached that point and committed the unpardonable sin. (Matthew 12:31, 32) Therefore, no sacrifice for their sin was offered. Even though God foreknew the enormous consequences that sin would bring to Himself and His children, His foreknowledge did not prevent Him from creating those who would eventually rebel. What a loving God!
3. The third immutable truth that comes out of the drama of sin is simply stunning. Contrary to what a lot of people believe, God does not destroy sinners with fire at the end of the thousand years because they refused to honor and obey *Him*. God is the meekest being in the universe. Here is a profound point: God does not use His divine powers of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence to keep Himself on the throne. Instead, God uses His divine powers to insure that His universe will be a wonderful home for His children. The point is that God has a very simple reason for destroying the wicked with fire. God only annihilates sinners *after* He has demonstrated to the saints that His laws are singularly designed for the happiness and well being of His subjects. In other words, the annihilation of rebels is necessary to stop sorrow, sickness, suffering and death. There is no other option for eliminating these horrible curses. When the wicked are destroyed, sin will be destroyed and then this Scripture will be



fulfilled: “. . . **Death has been swallowed up in victory.**”  
(1 Corinthians 15:54)

Given these three immutable truths, we can say that God has granted His children the power of choice; we can also say that God is meek and selfless; and furthermore, the destruction of the wicked will be totally justified.

**Option C:** Abandon Lucifer after he is created so that he does not come to know his Creator. A loving parent cannot abandon his offspring and certainly, a loving God could do no less. In fact, if you really want an inside glimpse into God’s heart of love, consider this: God foreknew that Lucifer would eventually become hostile toward Him, but He gave Lucifer the highest position and greatest gifts that a created being could possess. Lucifer was appointed as a guardian cherub. He stood on the left side of the throne and Michael stood on the right. Lucifer was just below Michael, the archangel, in authority and glory. No created being was given more talent, glory, authority, or power than Lucifer. These gifts speak volumes about God’s love for Lucifer – especially when you understand God’s foreknowledge. Think this through: God treats His subjects on the basis of what He knows is best for us (His infinite love), not on the basis of what He knows we will do (His foreknowledge).

**Option D:** Kill Lucifer while he is still a great friend. Of course, this was not an option for God. How could God justify killing an innocent being? If God had killed Lucifer before he sinned, God would be guilty of murder! If God killed Lucifer on the basis of His foreknowledge, how could He justify His action to the angels when Lucifer had done nothing wrong? Because God is pure in heart, He could not deceive the angels by disguising Lucifer’s death as an accident. If God killed Lucifer without justification, intelligent angels would have rightfully concluded that God is a tyrant! Despots destroy those who threaten their authority because the self-centered ego cannot let go of the two things it loves most; control over others and wealth to satisfy every selfish desire.

God claims to be righteous in everything He does (Isaiah 41:10) and killing Lucifer to avoid having problems with him would not be righteous. In fact, God has done just the opposite. He has permitted Lucifer to live for a few thousand years *after* his rebellion to demonstrate a very important point about sin. Sin hurts. Sin causes the innocent to suffer. Sin produces sorrow, suffering, sickness and death. God’s rules for eternal life are righteous and true – not because He says so – but because they can be proven to be so.

Lucifer and a great host of sinners will be destroyed by fire at the end of sin's drama, but God will be totally justified in the eyes of every survivor *before* He annihilates the first wicked angel or human being!

**Option E:** Kill Lucifer when he first sins. If God had killed Lucifer immediately, the angels – who did not have the knowledge of good and evil at that time – would have concluded that God is not a God of love. In other words, if Lucifer had been killed for disagreeing with God, it would have appeared to the angels that the moment one deviates from God's will, KABOOM! It is sudden death! It would be a terror to live throughout eternity with a God who might explode in fury like this. So, God allowed Lucifer to live for a few millennia so that the nature and properties of sin might develop and be understood by angels and humans.

**Option F:** Kill Lucifer to limit his influence on the other angels. If God had killed Lucifer to limit his influence on others, the universe would not have had an opportunity to observe and understand the awful properties of sin. The knowledge of good and evil would have been incomplete. If Lucifer had been prematurely put to death, the possibility of sin occurring *again* would have remained high because the angels would not have understood the consequences of sin. By allowing sin to run its ugly and grievous course for a few thousand years, God has provided a comprehensive drama that clearly reveals the terrible properties of sin. Angels as well as human beings now have access to "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Prior to the rise of sin, God alone had this knowledge. Now you know why the tree in Genesis 2 was given this name.

God has predetermined that sin must last long enough to demonstrate this truth: Rebellion against the infinitely wise laws of God *always* produces suffering, sorrow, sadness and death. The profound point here is that God wants the universe to know that His laws are not arbitrary. He did not make them up to suit His fancy. God's laws were framed by infinite wisdom and they are based on principles of love. God's laws encompass all of the issues of life. He alone knows what it takes to happily live throughout eternity. Remember, He has foreknowledge. Since God foreknew the rise of sin and the harvest of suffering that sin would produce, He opted to allow Lucifer to live for a few thousand years for the benefit of everyone who would choose to live eternally. The drama of sin will be constantly studied throughout eternity and "the knowledge of good and evil" will prevent the rise of sin a second time.

**Option G:** To protect Himself from the lies of Lucifer and the ignorance which sin would impose on billions of human beings, God wrote a book. With technology exceeding anything known to man, the Father “penned” a complete history of sin *before* Jesus created angels or human beings. (See Revelation 17:8) This book (or scroll) is called the “Book of Life,” for it contains the complete story of life. (Revelation 3:5; 5:7; 20:15) The Father wrote down a complete history of life so that He could show the universe what He knew *before* life was given to any creature. He sealed the Book of Life with seven great seals so that the contents of this book would not be disclosed until the very end of sin’s drama. If the contents of the Book of Life were prematurely revealed, God would not be able to recover beyond a reasonable doubt from the accusation that He manipulated the eternal destiny of His children with His foreknowledge. This fact confuses a lot of people. They say, “If my eternal destiny is my choice and God already knows my eternal destiny, do I really have any choice in the matter?” The answer is a resounding “Yes!”

God’s foreknowledge about our choices has no bearing on our choices. For example, suppose you record a football game on Monday night. Because you watched the game as you recorded it, you know the outcome of the game when it ends. A day later, a friend comes over to watch the tape and your friend does not know the outcome of the game. Does your foreknowledge have any affect on the taped game? Of course, not! In God’s case, He can record the game *before* it takes place because He has perfect foreknowledge. The Book of Life was sealed because God does not want anyone to know what He knows until the right time arrives.

We are free to rebel against His laws or to submit to His authority. This is our choice. The fact that He already knows what we will do has no bearing on what we do. Keep this thought in mind as we proceed through this study: *No one will be judged according to what is written in the Book of Life.* By keeping the contents of the Book of Life sealed until the end of the thousand years, God will prove to everyone that even though He has perfect foreknowledge, He did not manipulate one of His subjects. God will prove that He is a God of love. Remember, we were created in God’s image. God has a free will and we have a free will. God freely exercises His choices and we can freely exercise our choices. God takes full responsibility for His actions and so must we. God is our Creator and we are accountable to Him.

### **God Can Be Trusted**

Now that we have examined seven options which God faced before creating Lucifer, you know *why* God wrote the Book of Life. God has a

few things to say to the whole universe at the end of the thousand years, and the contents of the Book of Life will do the talking. Because the Father is a God of love, He can be difficult to understand at times because His love is not like our love. God's love is not corrupted with selfishness. Many people think of God's mercy or generosity as love, but God's love is more than mercy and generosity. God's love is a *balance* between justice and mercy. Mercy and justice are not antagonists in the courtroom of His love. Consider how mercy and justice work together in God's government. God uses His awesome powers of divinity to ensure His government of love is eternally imposed throughout His universe. In other words, He does not use His divine powers to selfishly maintain His exalted throne. He uses His omnipotence and omniscience to keep His children safe and happy. Because finite children cannot fathom the wisdom or plans of their infinite Father, faith in God is a crucial matter. God is doing things right now that will take thousands of years to understand. So, how does a person live at peace and in adoration of a God whose actions are not understood? How does a person live "in the fog of darkness" until the time for light comes? There is only one way. Jesus said, **"You have to trust in the Father and in me."** (John 14:1) God's subjects have to trust Him. Rebellion indicates a lack of trust. Rebellion says "my way is better." Rebellion is particularly harmful because it ruins every wonderful project which God is trying to accomplish before the project comes to completion. Time after time God has proven that He can be explicitly trusted. Faith in God is rewarded because faith always gives way to understanding. (Hebrews 11:6; 1 Corinthians 13:10) *Faith in God is an experience that when seen in reverse, makes perfect sense.* God stands today where we will stand tomorrow.

### **The Great White Throne**

**"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged [sentenced] according to what they had done as recorded in the books."** (Revelation 20:12, insertion mine) The Bible indicates that God assigned some angels to faithfully record everything that happens in His universe. (Malachi 3:16; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Daniel 7:10) I like to think of these recording angels as God's secretaries who use powerful camcorders. They do not miss a word, a deed or a motive that goes on in a universe brimming with life. Their records are kept in books of deeds, and these books are not to be confused with *the book* sealed with seven seals. The books of deeds and the Book of Life will be opened at the end of the 1,000 years and both will be presented for all to see. (See Daniel 7:9,10;

Ecclesiastes 12:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12) There will be no blame, no denial, no excuses, no escape from God's record of life when the Great White Throne scene occurs at the end of the 1,000 years. After the wicked dead are resurrected, the books of deeds will be opened and their lives will be presented before them. They will see that God judged them accurately and sentenced them fairly and righteously. All wicked people will confess that they were judged on the basis of their choices and their actions as recorded in the books. The Bible says, **“. . .The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”** (Revelation 20:12) The point is that the eternal destiny of each person is based on his choices.

When the wicked observe the righteous and fair judgment of their life as recorded in the books of deeds, they will kneel before God admitting that God's record is flawless and His judgment fair. When righteous people see their life's record, they too will kneel before God and confess that God's record is flawless. The righteous will have no claim to the marvelous gift of eternal life that He bestowed on them and they kneel before God's great mercy. Consider the scene: Two groups of people will kneel before God on that day: One will kneel before God's justice, the other before His mercy. **“By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength.’ All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But in the Lord all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.”** (Isaiah 45:23-25)

After the righteous and wicked confess that God is righteous and true, the seventh seal on the Book of Life will be broken and the all important book will be opened. The secret contents of the Book of Life will be presented before that vast throng. Everyone will be astonished that God, foreknowing the choices of every angel and person, extended so much patience, love and grace. Everyone will recognize that God foreknew who would hate Him and rebel against Him long before He gave them life. Yet, even with this knowledge, God graciously bestowed the gift of life on billions of angels and people any way. More amazingly, the Father gave Jesus as a ransom for sinners. When this revelation occurs, every knee will bow again, but not in submission to God's awesome authority and power. Rather, every knee will humbly bow before God admitting that He is worthy of love, honor and worship because He is love! He is far more generous than He needs to be in order to be fair. The depths of God's love and goodness are unbelievable! What a day that will be. I am looking forward to this great occasion.

**Segment II****The Secret Contents of the Book of Life****The Seven Seals**

**“Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?’ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.”** (Revelation 5:1-4)

Too many students of apocalyptic prophecy skip over the pivotal importance of the book that was sealed with seven seals, because they do not understand why the book is necessary. It’s as though the seven seals are more important than the contents of the book itself. Actually, the contents of the book have much more significance than the seals securing the book. The exalted purpose of the book gives the seven seals their importance! God wrote a complete history of life before life occurred and sealed it because He did not want anyone to know what He foreknew. Many Christians do not understand how this book resolves an enormous problem for God. The throne room scene described in Revelation 4-6 highlights the fact that sin is a very serious problem in God’s universe. The scene also demonstrates that God has a plan to prevent sin from rising again within His universe. Once you understand the issues involved with sin from Heaven’s perspective, the story of the seven seals will make a lot of sense *just as it reads in the Bible*.

**The Lamb’s Book of Life**

It is important to remember that before sin began, God solved the sin problem! He solved the sin problem by writing a complete history of life in a book. Then, He sealed it with seven seals. The following texts prove in three steps that the book sealed with seven seals is appropriately called the Book of Life.

1. First, John mentions the Book of Life six times in Revelation, and he distinguishes the Book of Life from other books that are in Heaven. (Revelation 3:5; 20:12) Daniel also makes a distinction between “books,” plural and “the Book [of Life],” singular. (Daniel 7:9,10; 12:1) After Jesus (the Lamb) was found worthy to receive the book having seven seals in Revelation 5, John refers to the book with a possessive

noun. He calls it, “the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Revelation 21:27) or “the Book of Life belonging to the Lamb.” (Revelation 13:8) In other words, *after* the Lamb received the book with seven seals from the right hand of the Father, the Lamb possessed “the Book of Life.”

2. Second, the Book of Life, unlike the other books of record in Heaven, remains sealed until the end of the 1,000 years. (Revelation 20:12) This is a critical point. *The Book of Life is not opened or used during the judgment of human beings.* Human beings will be judged according to their actions and choices which are recorded in the books of deeds. (Ecclesiastes 12:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Daniel 7:9, 10; Malachi 3:16; Revelation 20:12) When Abel was born to Adam and Eve, his life’s record was recorded in the book of deeds “in real time,” just as it happened. The books of deeds were opened in 1844 and, most likely, Abel’s record was the first to be examined since he was the first person to die. (Daniel 7:10; 8:14) On the other hand, the Book of Life is not opened until the end of the millennium. (Revelation 20:12) According to the Bible, the Book of Life is opened once – at the end of the 1,000 years. (Revelation 20:12) The chronology of the seals indicates the Book of Life is the book sealed with seven seals.
3. Third, we know the book with seven seals is the Book of Life because of its contents. Even though no one knows the specifics found within the book sealed with seven seals (Revelation 5:3), we do know about the contents! Notice this verse: **“If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”** (Revelation 20:15) This verse speaks volumes. Many Christians read this verse and think the Book of Life contains *only* the names of the saved. They interpret the title to mean the “Book of [Eternal] Life.” The Bible does not confer this meaning on the book even though the people who will receive eternal life will be found in the book. The Book of Life includes the life’s record of *everyone* who was given life from God. Every person was originally entered into His book because God foreknew who would receive the gift of life from the beginning. Our choices and actions were prerecorded in God’s book before we had the privilege of living. (See Psalm 139:16.) Naturally, the question rises, “Why was every life prerecorded only to have the names of the wicked blotted out before they were created?” On the basis of perfect foreknowledge, God wrote out a complete history of life before life was created and then He “blotted out” the names of the people who would choose rebellion. He did not blot out



their record of life, He simply blotted out their names.

### **Blotted Out?**

Perhaps a little background information about “blotting out” names will be helpful. In ancient times, the tribes of Israel kept very accurate records of their family tree. We find two excellent examples of this in the Bible. In Matthew 1, the lineage of Jesus is traced back to Abraham. In Luke 3, the lineage of Jesus is traced back to Adam. It was the custom in those days, to enter the names of the offspring in the official records of the nation because tribal lineage was very important. The land of Canaan was divided according to the size and lineage of each tribe. (Joshua 14:5) Temple responsibilities and duties among the priests were determined by lineage. (Exodus 40; Numbers 4) Even more, God said, **“No one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation.”** (Deuteronomy 23:2) Whenever an Israelite defiantly violated the law, depending on the offense, God commanded that person to be “cut off” from his people or put to death. If a person was “cut off” from his nation, his name was blotted out of the tribal rolls. Erasures were not possible. The written evidence of that life could not be removed. However, the name was blotted out with an ink blot so that the identity of the wicked person could not be known. This imagery helps to explain two important points. First, God wrote out a complete history of life and He included everyone in the record who would receive life. Then, He blotted out the names of those who would refuse to submit to the Holy Spirit. Second, if this information was “leaked” prematurely, God would have a very difficult time proving that He did not predestine some people to eternal death and some to eternal life *before* they were created. So, the book was sealed – seven times.

My life and your life are recorded in the Book of Life. Because God foreknew who would choose eternal life and who would choose rebellion, He has determined that no one could have access to this information (that is, information indicating who would be saved and lost) until sin’s drama has been completed. So, He *perfectly* sealed the book of life with seven seals and put it in Heaven’s vault. **Keep this thought in mind: The Book of Life remains sealed until the 1,000 years are ended. The Book of Life has nothing to do with the judgment of mankind.** Humanity is not judged or predestined to life or death on the basis of God’s foreknowledge. We are judged according to our deeds. (Revelation 22:12) Our deeds are recorded as they transpire. Angels chronicle our daily actions in the books of deeds. (See Daniel 7:9, 10; Revelation 20:12;



2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14 and Malachi 3:16.)

### God Proves Three Things

God wrote a complete history of life before life began to prove three things at the end of sin's drama. **First**, He will prove that every being was granted the power of choice. **Second**, He will prove that He did not manipulate our freedom of choice. In other words, by prerecording the lives of everyone in the Book of Life, God can show at the appointed time that even though He foreknew who would rebel and who would submit to His authority, He did not treat anyone unfairly. God's love will not allow Him to treat one rebellious child unfairly. **Third**, the Book of Life will exonerate God from all charges of unrighteousness. When the Book of Life is opened at the end of the thousand years, everyone will see that the contents of the Book of Life are identical to the books of deeds. In other words, God will prove to the universe that He foreknew the outcome of every life before life was granted to the first being. God will prove that He foreknew the rise of sin, and that He was willing to die for sinners from the beginning if they were not defiant sinners. God will prove that He not only gave life to His creatures, but He also gave the power of choice to them so they could rebel against Him if they wanted. He will prove that Jesus was willing to cease to exist for the rest of eternity in order to save sinners. This is God's humility and love – a love that goes beyond finite comprehension.

### Bible Writers Mention the Book of Life

Several Bible writers knew that the Book of Life existed. Notice this conversation between Moses and God: **“But now, please forgive their sin [of Israel] – but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.” The Lord replied to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.”** (Exodus 32:32, 33) Moses knew that God *had written* the history of life in the Book of Life and he begged God to forgive Israel or blot his name out of the book that had been written! God responded to Moses saying that whoever has sinned against Him would be blotted out. This response has led some Christians to conclude that the Book of Life is a dynamic recording, that is, names are added and removed as necessary. This is not the case for two reasons. First, the Book of Life was written and sealed before the creation of the world. (Revelation 17:8) Second, the eternal destiny of people is not decided until they stand before the judgment bar of Christ! (2 Corinthians 5:10) So, God's response to Moses is an assurance that the wicked *have been* blotted out of His book. Moses knew that the book *had been written* – that is, the book had been completed! Therefore,

God's response to Moses must be understood within this context. God said, "When I wrote the *Book of Life*, I blotted out the names of those who would sin against me." Notice how this conforms with a statement taken from Revelation concerning the appearing of the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation: **". . . The inhabitants of the Earth whose names have not been written in the Book of Life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast . . ."**

(Revelation 17:8) Did you notice when the Book of Life was written in verse 8? Did you also notice whose *names* were left out of the Book of Life at the time it was written? God already knows who will worship the beast and who will not; God knows everything. But (and this is an emphatic "but"), even though God foreknows what we will do, the choice has to be ours! This is freedom. Because God gives us the power of choice, the responsibility for our actions rests on our heads. If we were mere robots, we would have no moral obligation or responsibility. However, in a universe of unfettered freedom, people who have the power of choice also bear responsibility and accountability for their choices.

King David knew about the Book of Life. He wrote, **"May they [the wicked] be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous."** (Psalm 69:28, insertion mine) King David also knew that his entire life record was written in the Book of Life long before he was born. He wrote, **"Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."** (Psalm 139:16) Jesus alluded to the Book of Life when He said to His disciples, **"However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."** (Luke 10:20) Paul also mentions the Book of Life by name: **"Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life."** (Philippians 4:3)

### The Seven Seals

Now that we know something about the purpose and contents of the Book of Life, and we know why it was sealed, we naturally want to know about the seven seals that protect the sensitive data inside the book. The seven seals on the Book of Life are associated with seven revelations about Jesus. When the Father wrote the Book of Life, He foreknew the rise of sin and He foreknew that Jesus would die for sinners. This is why John says that Jesus is **"the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world."** (Revelation 13:8) The Father, Son, and Holy

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Spirit agreed from the beginning that Jesus would undertake the task of resolving the sin problem for man. (Psalm 2; John 3:16) They also agreed that Jesus would be the divine agent who would resolve the sin problem for the Godhead as well. In order to resolve the sin problem for both God and man, Jesus had to be found worthy by angels and men! This is why the angelic host and the twenty-four elders from Earth were summoned to the great convention described in Revelation 4 and 5 and Daniel 7:9. (The twenty-four elders were people taken from Earth and are serving as members of a jury.)

When the solution for sin was presented before this innumerable congregation (the Book of Life contains the solution to the sin problem), everyone present agreed that Jesus alone was worthy to receive the book sealed with seven seals. (Revelation 5) Because the angels and elders have the power of choice, this was not a rubber stamp approval. Jesus was found worthy to redeem man on the basis of His accomplishments, that is, His perfect life and shed blood. (Revelation 5:9) He was also found worthy to exonerate the Godhead of all charges of misconduct on the basis of His perfect submission to the Father's will. (John 6:38; Hebrews 5:7-10) These points are mentioned because no one other than Jesus can solve the sin problem for God or for man. The unique qualifications of Jesus permit Him to resolve the sin problem in seven campaigns. As each seal is broken open on the Book of Life, a new campaign begins on Earth. Actually, this is why the book of Revelation is called, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." The book of Revelation explains an incredible series of campaigns that sweep away the mystery and reveal all that Jesus really is! Jesus is more than an angel. Jesus is more than a man. Jesus is fully God!

### **Seven Revelations about Jesus**

Jesus received the Book of Life in 1798 and He broke the first seal at that time. This date will be closely examined in the next section. As each subsequent seal is broken, a new revelation about Jesus is disseminated throughout Heaven and Earth. This process grows in glory and intensity until everyone sees a full disclosure of the Creator. At the end of the thousand years, every being who has received life from Jesus will be present. At the time this book was published, three seals have been broken open and the fourth seal is next. The seven seals contain seven progressive revelations about Jesus:

**Seal 1:** The salvation of Jesus

**Seal 2:** The teachings of Jesus

**Seal 3:** The judgment bar of Jesus

**Seal 4:** The authority of Jesus

**Seal 5:** The faith of Jesus

**Seal 6:** The glory of Jesus

**Seal 7:** The deity of Jesus

The question could be asked, why are there seven revelations of Jesus? Seven is a perfect number – God’s signature showing completion. The Father has predetermined a complete revelation of Jesus because the Father wants the universe to understand something about the operation of the Godhead. Jesus has the power, prerogatives and rights of the Father and He is due the same honor and worship! (Colossians 1:16-19; John 5:23) Because Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1; Revelation 19:13), Jesus is the spokesperson for the Godhead. Jesus is that member of the Godhead who lives among His creation as one of us, so that He might speak to us and reveal the will and ways of the Father to us. Because Jesus humbled Himself to come, live, and die as a man, the Father, at just the right time, stepped aside and exalted Jesus above the highest heavens! In this continuing process, the universe will learn that Jesus is coeternal and coequal with the Father. Then, at the end of the thousand years, after receiving the highest honor that can be bestowed, Jesus will give His position back to the Father so that He may live among His created beings. Paul describes this incredible scene writing, **“The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he [the Father] has put everything under his [Jesus’] feet.”** Now when it says that **‘everything’ has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this [destroyed death], then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.**” (1 Corinthians 15:26-28, insertions mine)

Think about this for a moment. After Jesus has received all the glory, praise and accolades that can be given, He does not remain there, eternally basking in that glory and fame. Rather, He chooses, once again, to be subject to the Father so that He can live among His creation. What a Creator! What a God! What love! What a stunning revelation about the humility and meekness of the Godhead! “Like Father – like Son!”

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**Segment III****When Was the First Seal Broken?**

We are faced with a substantial mystery when it comes to dating the events described in Revelation 4-6. As you might expect, Christianity is divided on this topic. Advocates of a pre-tribulation rapture believe Revelation 4 will occur in the future because they believe the breaking of the first seal marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Prior to the twentieth century, a majority of Christians believed Jesus was found worthy to receive the book sealed with seven seals at His return to Heaven in A.D. 30. Since the Christian community is “poles apart” on this subject today, let us take a moment to consider the substance of both views.

**Will the Church Escape the Great Tribulation?**

Advocates of a pre-tribulation rapture believe the seven seals are broken *after* the rapture. They base some of their reasoning on the idea that John was “raptured” to Heaven to see the Great Tribulation *from* the safety of Heaven. They believe that John’s experience parallels the Church’s experience in the last days. But, the question rises, “What does John’s trip to Heaven have to do with the church being raptured before the Great Tribulation begins?” John did not physically leave the Isle of Patmos and go to Heaven. John says he was taken to Heaven “in the spirit” – in a vision. (Revelation 4:2; 9:17) Similarly, Paul says he visited Heaven in visions that were so real that he thought he was actually there! He saw and heard many wonderful things that he could not express in words. (2 Corinthians 12) Even though Paul experienced this wonderful privilege, Paul did not escape incarceration or martyrdom. Emperor Nero beheaded him because of his faith and commitment to Jesus. Legend has it that the Romans also tried to kill the prophet John by throwing him into a pot of boiling oil. When the Romans saw that John was miraculously saved from death, he was set free. The point is that Paul and John did not go to Heaven, and they did not escape tribulation and death. If Jesus did not spare His closest disciples from tribulation and death (nine of the twelve died as martyrs), and if Jesus “handed over” the saints to the little horn for tribulation and death during the 1,260 years of the Dark Ages (Daniel 7:25), why would He spare “end time Christians” from forty-two months of the Great Tribulation? (Revelation 13:5)

The strongest rebuttal to the doctrine of a pre-tribulation rapture is this: The rules of apocalyptic prophecy do not permit a pre-tribulation rapture. John’s experience in Revelation 4 cannot represent the

experience of the Church during the Great Tribulation because John is sent back to Earth! In Revelation 10, John is told to eat a little book that was given to him and *he* is told to prophesy again to kings and nations. (Revelation 10:11) If John (representing the Church) is in Heaven during the Great Tribulation, how could John (representing the Church) accomplish this assignment without returning to Earth? There is nothing within the four rules, the five essential doctrines or within Revelation 4-6 that puts believers in Heaven prior to the Great Tribulation. In fact, the Bible actually says “the saints” will be on Earth during the Great Tribulation. **“He [the beast, the crisis government] was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.”** (Revelation 13:7) The followers of Jesus will be persecuted for forty-two months and many will be slain during the fifth seal. (Revelation 6:9-11; 12:11; 13:5; 20:4; Daniel 12:12) The Bible also indicates that a large number of Christians will survive the Great Tribulation to see Jesus appear in clouds of glory! The doctrine of a pre-tribulation rapture will rupture when the Great Tribulation begins. Millions of Christians will discover they were misled. Why do Christians want to run and hide from their prophetic destiny? The final accomplishment of the body of Christ (the Church), though weak and feeble as it is, will be a stunning victory over the beast and its image through the power of Christ. (1 John 5:4; Revelation 20:4)

### **What Does Church History Offer?**

The historical view of this topic has flaws, too. Down through the centuries, Christians have generally believed the scenes in Revelation 4 began a few years after Jesus ascended to Heaven. This idea has been perpetuated ever since the book of Revelation began circulating at the beginning of the second century A.D., but this view is faulty for several reasons. Here are two:

1. There is nothing within Revelation 4-6 indicating Jesus was found worthy to receive the book sealed with seven seals *shortly* after He returned to Heaven. Nothing is said in Revelation 4-6 about timing, except that Jesus *had been* slain. (Revelation 5:6) The timing of the convocation in Revelation 4-6 is not stated in Revelation because it was sealed in the book of Daniel, and the book of Daniel was sealed until the time of the end! Early Christians did not have Daniel's rules or Daniel's matrix, so they *assumed* that Jesus had been found worthy to receive the book with the seven seals shortly after He returned to Heaven. This assumption, like the assumption that Earth stood still and the Sun orbited around Earth, was harmless,

but it introduced more confusion than it resolved. In the sixteenth century, before Copernicus proved Earth orbited the Sun, the orbits of heavenly bodies were very difficult to calculate. However, once astronomers understood that Earth traveled around a stationary Sun, the orbits of heavenly bodies became much easier to determine. The same holds true on the timing of Revelation 4-6. Once the timing of Revelation 4-6 is properly determined from Daniel 7 and 8, the purpose of the book and the meaning of the seven seals are not hard to understand.

2. Apocalyptic prophecy is written in such a way that it has to be distorted to make sense if valid rules of interpretation are not used. This means the intended meaning of the seven seals will be distorted if their timing is not correctly determined. Even though we have not examined the meaning of the seven seals, a short presentation on the fourth seal can demonstrate how prophecy has been distorted for many centuries. Here is the fourth seal: **“When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the Earth.”** (Revelation 6:7, 8)

A person does not have to be a serious Bible scholar to see that when the fourth seal is broken, the results will be deadly. In fact, the rider’s name is “Death,” and the grave (Greek: *Hades*), like a persistent vulture, follows close behind Death to consume the dead. The Bible says they will have power to kill 25% of Earth’s population. They will kill with God’s four deadly judgments: sword, famine, plague and wild beasts. (Ezekiel 14:21) The question naturally rises, “If the fourth seal occurred in the past, **when** did God deliberately kill 25% percent of Earth’s population with His four deadly judgments?”

Before I respond to this question, please examine two statements spoken by God Himself. These passages are profound because God identifies His four deadly judgments and justifies their use. The first passage is a selection of verses taken out of “The Song of Moses.” The Israelites were required to memorize and sing this song. (Incidentally, this song will also be sung in Heaven! See Revelation 15:3.) The second statement was spoken to Ezekiel just before King Nebuchadnezzar was sent to plunder and totally destroy Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Take a few moments to absorb these divine declarations because the breaking of the fourth seal means death to a huge number of people.



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**Statement 1: The Song of Moses – 1437 B.C.**

**“Jeshurun** [A poetic name of endearment given to Israel. God used this name to indicate His affection for Israel, as though it were His pet.] **grew fat and kicked; filled with food, he became heavy and sleek. He abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his Savior. They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God – gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth. The Lord saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. . . . ‘I will heap calamities upon them and spend my arrows against them. I will send wasting *famine* against them, consuming pestilence and deadly *plague*; I will send against them the fangs of *wild beasts*, the venom of vipers that glide in the dust. In the street the *sword* will make them childless; in their homes terror will reign. Young men and young women will perish, infants and gray-haired men. . . .’**”  
(Selections from Deuteronomy 32:15-25, insertion and italics mine)

**Statement 2: Concerning the Destruction of Jerusalem – 586 B.C.**

**“The word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send *famine* upon it and kill its men and their animals, even if these three men – Noah, Daniel and Job – were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness,’ declares the Sovereign Lord. ‘Or if I send *wild beasts* through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the beasts, as surely as I live,’ declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate.’ ‘Or if I bring *a sword* against that country and say, ‘Let the sword pass throughout the land,’ and I kill its men and their animals, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved.’ ‘Or if I send *a plague* into that land and pour out my wrath upon it through bloodshed, killing its men and their animals, as surely as I live,’ declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness.’ For this is what the**



**Sovereign Lord says: ‘How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem *my four dreadful judgments* – sword and famine and wild beasts and plague – to kill its men and their animals!’ ”** (Selections from Ezekiel 14:12-21, italics mine)

God says that He has four deadly judgments which He uses to cauterize the growth of sin. God also says that He is reluctant to implement these judgments, but He is moved by divine justice (Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24) when the cup of sin becomes full. (For a more thorough study of the full cup principle, review Chapter 2 of my book *Warning! Revelation is about to be fulfilled.*) The Bible says that God destroyed the world in Noah’s day because man’s thoughts were constantly evil. (Genesis 6:5) The Bible indicates that God destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah and Jerusalem because of degenerate behavior. (Genesis 18, 19; Ezekiel 5) So, Bible history leaves no wiggle room on this matter: God’s patience with sin and sinners has a limit. God destroys people, cities and nations when extended mercy cannot produce repentance, reformation and redemption. (Genesis 19; Leviticus 18; Colossians 3:5, 6; Revelation 18 and 20) Unfortunately, we do not hear much about the wrath of God these days and this silence has led many people to diminish their accountability toward God. There are several texts in the Bible that highlight God’s dreadful judgments within a punitive context. (Read Leviticus 26, 1 Chronicles 21; Jeremiah 14, 27, 44; Ezekiel 6.) Now that you have a little background information on God’s four deadly judgments, we will return to the attempt of Christians to interpret and locate the breaking of the fourth seal.

### **History Cannot Produce a Fulfillment**

For twenty centuries, Christian expositors have made various claims of fulfillment for the fourth seal, but no one has stepped forward with a solution that has gained widespread acceptance. The problem with the fourth seal is the scope of destruction. The scope is huge and the destruction has to happen *between* the breaking of the third seal and the breaking of the fifth seal. The absence of a clear and convincing fulfillment should have caused more concern among Protestant expositors, but alas, prophetic details require distortion when things do not add up.

If the fourth seal was broken in ages past, what year was the fourth seal broken? When did Jesus punish the world by killing 25% percent of its people? A few Christians have argued the bubonic plague which swept through Europe in the sixth, fourteenth and seventeenth centuries was a fulfillment of the fourth seal. These epidemics were horrible, but the rate of death in each of these cases did not exceed two million people per year and these epidemics were local to Europe. Was the bubonic plague

sent as a *punitive judgment* from God or was the bubonic plague a consequence of poor sanitation and standing filth? The ravages of the bubonic plague did not kill 25% of the world's population.

Because the Protestant reformation grew out of persecution, numerous reformers in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries claimed the fourth seal covered a period of a thousand years – when the Church of Rome persecuted all who refused to obey its laws. The total number of martyrs during the Dark Ages (around A.D. 500 to A.D. 1500) has been estimated to be as low as ten million and as high as fifty million. When this figure is divided by a thousand years, the rate of martyrdom is a maximum of 50,000 people per year. No student of Protestant history doubts the persecution of the saints during the Dark Ages was horrible, but this interpretation does not begin to satisfy the specifications given in the fourth seal for two reasons. First, the Bible indicates that God's four judgments, sword, famine, plague and wild beasts, are punitive. They are directed *at wicked nations* who have filled up their cup of iniquity – not at faithful martyrs standing firm for God's truth. So, the fourth seal does not apply to the saints who were burned at the stake or imprisoned for their faith. Second, the Bible says that when the fourth seal is broken, God's four judgments will kill 25% of Earth's population. Even if the Catholic Church put fifty million saints to death, this could not meet the specifications of the fourth seal. The scope of destruction presented in the fourth seal is just too large.

A few Christians have suggested the fourth seal was broken around 1918, when at the height of its deadly grip, the world's worst outbreak of influenza killed twenty five million people in a single year! (From 1914 to 1918, nine million people died from World War I.) The influenza outbreak was horrible, and it was accompanied by a horrible war, but both events did not come close to killing 25% of the world's population. In short, history cannot produce a fulfillment of the fourth seal because the scope of the fourth seal is so large that nothing in the past can measure up. The second rule of apocalyptic prophecy says that a fulfillment occurs only when *all* of the specifications of a prophecy are met and there is no event in history that meets the 25% specification.

### **Understanding The Word**

Now that the specifications of the fourth seal are known, and since there is no evidence of a historical fulfillment, please consider the following solution. The breaking of the fourth seal will mark the beginning of the Great Tribulation. According to Rule One of apocalyptic prophecy, the fourth seal has to be broken after the third seal is broken. Let us assume for a moment that Jesus was found worthy to receive the book

in 1798. Let us assume the third seal was broken in 1844. (This timing will be demonstrated in the next segment.) Since 25% of Earth's population has not been killed with divine judgments since 1844, the breaking of the fourth seal would be next. The breaking of the fourth seal could be called "the shock and awe campaign" of God's destructive power. The books of Daniel and Revelation indicate that Jesus is about to declare war on Earth. The King of kings is about to impose a regime change on this planet. Jesus is about to release His deadly judgments against planet Earth because we have become a degenerate world and Earth's cup of sin is full. Jesus said the days during the last generation would parallel the days of Noah. (Matthew 24:37) As God's wrath breaks out, 25% of Earth's population will perish (Revelation 6:7, 8) during a period of perhaps thirty to sixty days. (This sequence of events is described at length in my book, *Warning! Revelation is about to be fulfilled.*)

### **The Keys to the Solution**

Because Revelation 4-6 says nothing about timing, we have to use four keys to unlock the timing of the convocation described by John:

- Key 1.** The dates of Daniel 7:9, 10 and Daniel 8:14 have to be understood.
- Key 2.** The exaltation and empowerment of Jesus in Daniel 7:13, 14 have to be understood.
- Key 3.** The subject of cleansing Heaven's temple has to be understood.
- Key 4.** The doctrine of parallel temples indicates the High Priest had to be found *worthy* on the Day of Atonement before he could cleanse the earthly temple.

When these four keys from Daniel are applied to Revelation 4-6, the mystery of timing can be resolved. Of course, if we correctly determine the date of the convocation in Revelation 4-6, the meaning of the seven seals will easily support this date, because the seals are broken in chronological order *after* Jesus receives the book. Remember, the intended meaning of apocalyptic prophecy cannot be determined without valid rules of interpretation. Throughout the ages, expositors have distorted scripture in an effort to make sense of the prophecies.

### **1798 Becomes a Key Date!!!**

The heavenly scene recorded in Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14 parallels the event recorded in Revelation 4 and 5. Daniel and John, separated by seven hundred years, were shown pieces of the *same event* from two different perspectives. This is not unusual in the Bible. For example, the rise and

fall of Earth's kingdoms was revealed to King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2, and similar information was revealed to Daniel in Daniel 7. These two men had visions fifty years apart. They were shown the rise and fall of the *same* kingdoms from two different perspectives. God uses repetition and enlargement to make His visions succinct and concise. King Nebuchadnezzar saw an image of various metals and Daniel saw a chronological sequence of strange beasts. The point is that the various metals of the image and the wild beasts represent the same kingdoms. The beauty of this process is that once a student of prophecy has enough data to ensure that both visions apply to the same event, the matrix takes over because there is chronological order in both prophecies. The details in one vision compliment the details in another.

We know from Chapter 3 of this book, that this great convocation was assembled in Heaven in 1798. The Father predetermined the date of this meeting thousands of years before it occurred; He aligned this convocation in Heaven with the fall of the papacy so that at the appointed time of the end, students of prophecy could determine the timing of this meeting even though the meeting was not observed by anyone on Earth.

Daniel saw “thrones set up” for this occasion, and the prophet John also saw the same event. Daniel was zoomed upward to Heaven and forward in time to witness an awesome meeting where John also saw thrones set up for this occasion! **“After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in Heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’ At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in Heaven with someone sitting on it. . . . Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.”** (Revelation 4:1, 2, 4) Of course, John could not know the timing of what he saw. He simply says, **“At once I was in the Spirit. . . .”** We now know that Daniel and John were zoomed forward in their visions to see things that would take place thousands of years later, and neither man understood the timing of what he was shown. *The privilege of understanding the timing of Revelation 4-6 occurs after the book of Daniel is unsealed.*

When John arrived in Heaven, he was awed by the things he saw. **“And immediately I was in the Spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in Heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow**

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

**“And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits [the seven brilliant angels that stand before God] of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts [strange looking creatures] full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.**

**“And when those beasts [creatures] give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.’ ”** (Revelation 4:2-11, KJV, insertions mine)

The description that John gave is not hard to figure out. He saw the Father sitting on an exalted throne. He saw twenty-four human beings (elders) wearing golden crowns and they were sitting around the Father. He saw the seven angels (seven living beings or spirits) who stand before God (Revelation 8:2; Revelation 15:1; Hebrews 1:14) and he also saw four living creatures standing around the throne. Of course, John noticed “ten thousand times ten thousand” angels attending the meeting. (Revelation 5:11) For many people, the four living creatures are a mystery, so a few words about them may be helpful at this point.

### **The Four Living Creatures**

The four living creatures in Revelation 4 represent the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. This definition may come as a surprise at first, but the third rule of apocalyptic prophecy produces this result! Rule Three states, *“Apocalyptic language can be literal, symbolic or analogous. To reach the intended meaning of apocalyptic prophecy, the*

*student must consider: (a) the context, (b) the use of parallel language elsewhere in the Bible, and (c) relevant statements in the Bible which define the symbol if an element is thought to be symbolic.”* Because we have to follow valid rules of interpretation to arrive at the intended meaning of prophecy, we have to consider the five specifications which John gives about the living creatures:

1. There were four living creatures surrounding the throne.
2. Each creature had six wings.
3. Each creature was full of eyes.
4. Each creature looked like a lion, a calf, a man and a flying eagle.
5. The four creatures never rested from giving praise and glory to God.

Before we try to reach a conclusion with these specifications, Rule Three says we need to consider the use of parallel language in the Bible. Consider the words of Ezekiel because he saw the four living creatures as well! Notice the ten specifications given in Ezekiel 1 and 10:

1. There were four living creatures having the appearance of a man. (1:5)
2. Each living creature had four faces, four wings and four hands. (1:6,7)
3. Each living creature had the faces of a lion, ox, man, and eagle. (1:10)
4. The four living creatures appeared to be on fire. Lightning flashed from the four living creatures. (1:13)
5. The four living creatures traveled at the speed of light. (1:14)
6. Above the four living creatures was a great expanse that looked like a sheet of ice. (1:22)
7. A glorious throne rested in the middle of this sparkling expanse. (1:26)
8. The bodies of the four creatures were covered with eyes. (10:12)
9. Four dynamic whirling wheels were located beside each creature. (1:15,16; 10:16)
10. The power of the four creatures came from the four wheels. (1:20; 10:17)

Even though there are slight variations in the descriptions of John and Ezekiel, I have no doubt that these two men were shown the same thing from two different perspectives. By giving different people different views of the same things, God expands our understanding of a subject. This is why there are four gospels! The perspective of Matthew is not sufficient. We need the perspectives of Mark, Luke and John to better understand the ministry of Jesus on Earth. For that matter, where would Christians be today without the perspectives of Paul?

When the fifteen specifications of John and Ezekiel are consolidated (as Rule Three dictates), the following conclusions are possible:

1. *Four* living creatures represent four manifestations of an omnipresent Holy Spirit (four clones of the same thing); that is, one Holy Spirit can be four places (everywhere) at the same time. The four living creatures are standing at the four points of the throne: north, south, east, and west.
2. The four living creatures are covered with *eyes*. The Holy Spirit has omniscience – a power that belongs only to deity. The Holy Spirit sees everything – forward and backward – the past, present and future – all at the same time. Jesus also said the Holy Spirit could speak on His own, but He does not. (John 16:13)
3. The four living creatures have the same four faces. Each face describes certain capabilities of the Holy Spirit. For example, the Holy Spirit has intelligent understanding (the face of a man – Ecclesiastes 8:1). The Holy Spirit has incredible strength (the face of the ox – Numbers 23:22). The Holy Spirit is powerful (the prowess of a lion – Numbers 23:24). The Holy Spirit can travel to its destination at the speed of lightning and swoop down on its prey wherever it may be (the face of an eagle – Deuteronomy 28:49). The Holy Spirit can move at the speed of lightening and is represented by the presence of six wings.
4. The Holy Spirit never ceases from extolling the majesty, generosity, goodness and grace of God. This is His work. He constantly brings glory to the Father and to Jesus by exalting them and hiding Himself. (John 16:14) This feature, in itself, says so much about the humility and meekness of the Godhead.

The Bible teaches that the Godhead is made up of three separate and distinct Gods: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three Gods make up the Trinity. They are one in purpose, plan and action.



These three Gods are equals in every way and they are coeternal. They serve the universe in distinct roles so that an infinite Godhead can be understood by a finite creation. The God we call “Father” serves as the Head of Government for the Universe. The God we call “Jesus” serves as the Creative Agent of the Godhead. The God we call “Holy Spirit” is omnipresent throughout the universe enabling communion between God and His children at all times. Paul says the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. He wrote, **“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”** (Romans 8:26) Jesus said the Holy Spirit is a distinct entity because He hears what is said and He could speak on His own if He wanted to! **“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”** (John 16:13, 14) Jesus also said sinning against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven, **“And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”** (Matthew 12:31, 32) This verse settles the question for me. The Holy Spirit is God. We can submit to or reject the Holy Spirit because he is an entity separate and distinct from Jesus. These and many other verses in the Bible bring me to the conclusion that the four living creatures represent the Holy Spirit. A lot more is waiting to be discovered about the four living creatures. When we examine the four horsemen of Revelation 6, you will be surprised to learn what the Holy Spirit can do!

### **Who Is Worthy to Receive the Book?**

The first order of business at the great convocation described in Revelation 4 and 5 was to find someone worthy to receive the Book of Life and break the seven seals. John wrote, **“Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?’ But no one in Heaven or on Earth or under the Earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the [24] elders said to me, ‘Do**



**not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.’ ”**

(Revelation 5:1-5, insertion mine) John does not tell us at first what he understood about this book; however, it is obvious that John understood certain things about it because he wept and wept when no one was found worthy to resolve the sin problem.

A normal person does not weep over something he does not understand. John wept because he felt deep grief and frustration. I can faintly imagine the setting of this meeting. An innumerable host of angels were called from distant galaxies to this great convocation. The Ancient of Days arrived and took His seat. An announcer called for nominees who could resolve the sin problem and exonerate God’s government of all charges of tyranny. Silence followed. No one in Heaven or Earth or even “under the Earth” was found worthy. (If a nominee happened to be dead and deemed worthy for this job, God would have instantly resurrected that person. In fact, several “resurrectees” were at the meeting. Moses and Jesus had been resurrected from the dead as well as some of the twenty four elders. Matthew 27:52, 53)

The silence broke John’s heart. John’s emotion might be compared to that of a wife sitting in a courtroom waiting for a credible witness to come forward and exonerate her innocent husband of false charges that carry a death sentence. It is interesting to notice that the Father offered the Book of Life to everyone in the universe before Jesus was considered. God is fair beyond a doubt. When Jesus humbly offered Himself, all Heaven broke out in joyful praise and thanksgiving! “Worthy is the Lamb,” they cried!

Consider the suspense as Jesus stepped forward: **“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the Earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.”** (Revelation 5:6, 7) This was a thrilling and awesome event. No awards ceremony on Earth has ever come close to matching the splendor of this occasion.

**“And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the Earth.’ ”**

(Revelation 5:9, 10) This song resolves a mystery. At first, no one was found worthy to take the book sealed with seven seals. What were the

qualifications that no one could meet? Look again at the song for it has the answer, **“with your blood you purchased men for God.”**

I am sure the angels have closely studied the record of Jesus’ life on Earth. When this convocation came to order in 1798 and nominations were solicited for someone to take the book, Jesus was found worthy because He is the person who (a) created man, (b) volunteered to die for man, (c) was born into sin and did not sin, and (d) lived a life of perfect compliance to the will of the Father. However, the greatest qualification that silenced all other nominations was His victory over Lucifer. No one else has ever been born under the obligation of law and been completely victorious over rebellion! After Jesus was found worthy to take the book, Jesus was given the seven attributes that belonged to the Father. This highest exaltation of Jesus is demonstrated in the jubilant song that followed: **“In a loud voice they sang: ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive (1) power and (2) wealth and (3) wisdom and (4) strength and (5) honor and (6) glory and (7) praise!’ ”**

(Revelation 5:12) Compare Daniel’s view of this scene: **“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”** (Daniel 7:13, 14)

### **Critical Point!**

Daniel 7 and Revelation 5 are synchronized. They are inseparably aligned because, in both cases, Jesus is given something that He did not have before. Jesus was given sovereign power (total control) in Daniel 7 and in Revelation 5. The transfer of sovereign authority firmly aligns Daniel 7 with Revelation 5, because sovereign power is granted only once. If Jesus had sovereign power prior to this occasion, no more power could be granted to Him at this time. (For comments on Jesus’ words that all power had been given to Him before He returned to Heaven, please see the segment in Chapter 3 titled, “All Authority?”) Daniel 7:14 indicates that Jesus *received* sovereign power and dominion that will never end, and Revelation 5:12 indicates Jesus was found worthy to receive power to break the seven seals.

At this huge convocation, the Father publicly gave Jesus total control over Heaven and Earth to accomplish two tasks: the consummation of salvation for mankind, and the exoneration of the Godhead from all charges of wrong doing. Who else could do this but Jesus? After the

angelic host and the 24 elders declared Jesus worthy to receive the Book of Life, the Father relinquished sovereign control to His *worthy* Son. In the presence of billions of angels, the scepter of power was transferred. This glorious heavenly scene, unseen by people on Earth, occurred in 1798. We know this because the timing of this convocation is linked to the downfall of the apostate Christian Church in Rome in Daniel 7.

### Harmony Harmony Harmony Harmony

Now that we are acquainted with lots of pieces in the puzzle, it's time to use the four keys mentioned earlier to solve the question of timing. Please give these four keys careful consideration.

1. **Jesus was given sovereign power in 1798.** In Chapter 3 of this book, we established the fact that Daniel 7:9 had to take place in 1798. We know that the Ancient of Days called Heaven's inhabitants to an assembly, and after taking His seat, ended the 1,260 years of papal persecution by pronouncing a restraining order in favor of the saints. The authority of the Church of Rome was wounded by Napoleon's forces, the pope was taken prisoner, and he was placed in exile. The wounding of the papacy on Earth aligns with the coronation of Jesus in Heaven. Jesus received Earth as His inheritance (Daniel 7:13, 14; Hebrews 1:2) in 1798 and 46 years later, in 1844, Jesus began cleansing Heaven's temple. The Bible says, ". . . **The court was seated and the books were opened.**" (Daniel 7:10)
2. **The third seal was broken in 1844.** The Bible teaches that man is not judged when he dies, nor does he go to Heaven or Hell at the time of death. Rather, when a person dies, it is as though that person is asleep. (See Chapter 13 in *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*.)

With the exception of a few cases like Enoch, Moses, Elijah, and the 24 elders, the saints are not in Heaven. Neither is there anyone burning in Hell. In death, the soul is in the same condition as it was prior to birth – it does not exist. When a person reaches the age of accountability, a record of his or her choices and actions is made *as they occur*. When that person dies, the record is sealed. This record is then used in the judgment of the dead. Jesus began to review and pass judgment on each dead person in 1844. (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10) The dead continue "sleeping" until they are either resurrected at the Second Coming (the righteous) or at the end of the thousand years (the wicked). Even though we have not examined the third seal, we will find that the judgment of the

dead begins with the breaking of the third seal in 1844. Thus the following points also link together:

1. The exaltation of Jesus in Daniel 7 is linked to 1798.
2. The judgment of the dead is linked to the 2,300 years mentioned in Daniel 8:14.
3. The 2,300 years are also linked to the third seal (Revelation 6:5,6).
4. The fourth seal marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation and the judgment of the living!

Whew! This is a lot of linking, but the matrix in Daniel clearly aligns these pieces of the puzzle. See the chart below:

**The Alignment of Daniel 7, Daniel 8, Daniel 9, Revelation 5 and the First Three Seals**

	457 B.C		A.D. 33		A.D. 538		1798	1844	Today
Rev 6							Seals 1 2	Seal 3	Jesus Going Through the Books of Record Judging the Dead
Rev 5							Jesus Found Worthy		
Dan 9	457 B.C. -- 70 Weeks -- A.D. 33								
Dan 8	457 B.C. -----2,300 Years ----- 1844								
Dan 7					A.D. 538 -- 1,260 Years -- 1798				

Chart 10.1

**3. The High Priest was found worthy on the Day of Atonement.**

The doctrine of parallel temples contributes to the matrix in Chart 10.1. In Leviticus 16, the High Priest had to be found worthy *before* he could cleanse the earthly temple on the Day of Atonement. To gain God's approval, the High Priest had to present himself before God within the Most Holy Place with the blood of a young bull. This bull came from the High Priest's herd. In other words, the High Priest had to provide his own blood for this sacrifice. The parallel here is obvious. Jesus provided His own blood for the redemption of

sinners, and after a careful examination, He was found worthy before the Father, the 24 elders, and the angelic host to receive the Book of Life.

After the High Priest received God's approval in the earthly temple, the High Priest proceeded to remove the record of sin from the temple. (Leviticus 16) There are three points in this process which should be considered.

- a. The Day of Atonement service in the earthly temple shadowed the cleansing of Heaven's temple. We know from Daniel 8:14, the cleansing of Heaven's temple began in 1844. Even though the Day of Atonement occurred every year in the earthly temple, Paul indicates that the judgment day would convene once, near the end of the world. (Acts 17:31; Hebrews 9:26; 2 Corinthians 5:10) The Jews, even to this day, call the Day of Atonement, "Yom Kippur" which means "The Day of Judgment."

Many people do not recognize this, but the book of Hebrews centers on the ministry of Jesus in a "Day of Atonement" capacity. Paul wrote, **"We have this hope [of salvation] as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. . . ."** (Hebrews 6:19, 20, insertion mine) **"For Christ is not entered into the [Most] holy places made with [human] hands, which are the figures of the true [temple in Heaven]; but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the [actual] presence of God for us [just like the High Priest did on the annual Day of Atonement when he went behind the veil.] Nor yet that he [Jesus] should offer himself often [again and again], as the high priest entereth into the [most] holy place every year [on the Day of Atonement] with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered [every year] since the foundation of the world: but [right] now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."** (Hebrews 9:24-26, KJV, insertions mine)

Paul clearly understood the doctrine of parallel temples. (Hebrews 8:1-5) He understood the annual cleansing of the earthly temple on the Day of Atonement was a shadow of a "one time" cleansing of the heavenly temple that would begin near the end of the world. Because Paul thought he was living close to the end of the world, he believed that Jesus had entered into the

Father's presence [that is, the Most Holy Place] at the time of His ascension to intercede for mankind. (Hebrews 6:19, 20) The problem with this perspective is timing. Paul, like the other disciples of Jesus, was convinced that he was living at the end of the world and he clearly says so in other places. (Hebrews 1:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 7:29; Romans 13:12) However, the book of Revelation did not exist in Paul's day and the book of Daniel had not yet been unsealed. The point is that Paul saw the exaltation of Jesus as man's High Priest, and he saw Jesus serving in the Most Holy Place at "the end of the world" as our High Priest without knowing the timing of what he saw. Paul had the same limitations that Daniel and John had; they did not know about 1798 and 1844. To his credit, Paul wrote, **"For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears."** (1 Corinthians 13:9, 10)

- b. In ancient times, the worthiness of the High Priest was determined *just before* the temple was to be cleansed. The heavenly process is consistent with this fact because Jesus was found worthy in 1798, which is just before He began to cleanse the temple in 1844.
  - c. The High Priest could not enter the Most Holy Place except on the Day of Atonement. (Leviticus 16:2) This is a particularly important point. Only one service in the earthly temple concerned the Most Holy Place. This service occurred on the Day of Atonement and the purpose of this service was the cleansing of the temple. Because the book of Hebrews is concerned with the exaltation of Jesus (Hebrews 1-5) and Christ's ministry in the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement (Hebrews 6-10), Paul's comments in the book of Hebrews must be understood as taking place at, or near, the end of the world. (Hebrews 9:26) In other words, the ministry of Jesus as our High Priest – carefully described in the book of Hebrews – applies after He was found worthy in 1798.
4. **The matrix aligns Daniel 7, Daniel 8 and Daniel 9 with Revelation 4-6.** After reviewing Chart 10.1, we find the prophetic matrix easily aligns Daniel 7, 8 and 9 with Revelation 4-6. The doctrines regarding the state of the dead and parallel temples also contribute to this sequence of events. Let us review how Bible history and recorded history affirm the presence of a relationship between 1798 and 1844.

- a. The 1,260 years of persecution by the little horn power in Daniel 7 ended in February 1798, because the Father issued a restraining order against the little horn shortly after He took His seat. (Daniel 7:20, 21)
- b. The seventy weeks of Daniel 9 began in 457 B.C. and terminated with A.D. 33. Jesus confirmed the synchrony of these dates by conducting the Passover service for His disciples at the right time in A.D. 30 (Mark 14) and by dying on the cross in the middle of the seventieth week. Jesus died on Friday afternoon, April 7, A.D. 30. (John 19)
- c. According to Daniel 9, seventy weeks of probationary time were granted to Israel as a last chance to fulfill God's covenant. The seventy weeks were "cut off" from the beginning of the 2,300 years mentioned in Daniel 8:14 so that if Israel was faithful to God (in Plan A), the 2,300 year prophecy (in Plan B) would not be necessary. In fact, the book of Daniel would have remained sealed forever if Israel had been faithful to God and His covenant. Since Jesus affirmed the middle year of the seventieth week with His death, there is no question that the seventy weeks and the 2,300 years began in 457 B.C. Consequently, there is no question that the 2,300 years terminated in the Spring of 1844 and the cleansing of Heaven's temple began at that time.

### **Daniel and John Favorably Compare**

Before we conclude this investigation on timing, please review the following parallels between Daniel and John:

**Daniel 7:9:** "As I looked, thrones [plural] were set in place."

**Revelation 4:2, 4:** "... before me was a throne ... Surrounding the throne were twenty four other thrones and seated on them were twenty four elders."

**Daniel 7:10:** "... Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him."

**Revelation 5:11:** "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand."

**Daniel 7:9:** "The Ancient of Days took His seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of His head was white like wool."

**Revelation 4:3, 4:** "The One who sat there had the appearance of a jasper [having a translucent brilliance, golden quartz color] and

carnelian [having the multilayered brilliance of a ruby]. The elders were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.”

**Daniel 7:9, 10:** “His throne was flaming with fire and its wheels were all ablaze.”

**Revelation 4:5:** “From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne seven lamps were blazing.”

**Daniel 7:13:** “I saw one like ‘a son of man.’ He approached the Ancient of Days.”

**Revelation 5:7:** “The Lamb approached the Father sitting on the throne and took the scroll from His right hand.”

**Daniel 7:14:** “He [the Son of Man] was given authority, glory and sovereign power.”

**Revelation 5:9, 12:** “. . . They sang a new song, ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals.’ ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!’ ”

These parallels are interesting, but not identical. In fact, if there was no other information, these parallels would not be close enough to say they were describing the same scene. However, we have other data that tells us Daniel and John are describing the same scene, so the differences are more helpful than harmful because the details add information from two different perspectives. The differences between Daniel 7 and Revelation 4-6 can be compared to Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 where there are two different perspectives of the *same* thing, even though the visions are very different.

Now that we have examined the timing of Revelation 4-6, please review Chart 10.2. Notice the vertical alignment of the various elements that have been discussed thus far.



# Revelation 4-6 Expands The Matrix

Today

Timing:	538 B.C.	331 B.C.	168 B.C.	A.D. 476	A.D. 538	1798	1844	Great Tribulation
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Rev 4-6						Jesus Found Worthy, Then Breaks First Three Seals Between 1798 - 1844		Seal 4 Marks The Beginning of the Great Tribulation			
						1	2	3	4	5	6
Daniel 8	---- 457 B.C. -----2,300 Day/Years ----- 1844 ----								The Time of the End		
	Ram with Two Horns	Goat With One Great Horn -- then Four Horns	-- 538 -1798 --				Pre- Advent Judgment of the Dead	Judgment of the Living	Horn Power from the North: Stern Faced King		
Daniel 7	Bear with Three Ribs	Leopard with Four Heads	Monster	10 Horns at First	1,260 Day/Years A.D. 538 to 1798		Books Opened	Little Horn Heard Boasting	Beasts are Burned Up in the Fire at the End		
					Little Horn Rises Uproots 3 Horns	Court Seated Little Horn Falls					
Daniel 2	Chest of	Thighs of	Legs of	Feet of					10 Toes 10 Kings		
	Silver	Bronze	Iron	Iron and Clay					Iron/Clay		
	Medo- Persia	Grecia	Rome	Many Kings					10 Kings		

Chart 10.2

**Segment IV****The Seven Seals Examined****With God, Timing Is Everything**

No doubt you have heard it said, “With God, timing is everything.” This statement is particularly poignant in this study on the seven seals. If the Book of Life were prematurely opened, God would not be able to “prove” beyond doubt that He does not use His divine powers of omniscience and omnipotence to manipulate His children and the outcome of history. So, God sealed the Book of Life with seven seals to *prove* at an appointed time that He does not manipulate the choices of His children. His children are truly free to make up their own minds; therefore, we are completely accountable for our actions. We can choose to submit to God’s government or we can choose to rebel. With these thoughts in mind, consider how timing affects the following events:

1. The Book of Life was written *before* life was created.
2. Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life in 1798.
3. The first seal was broken in 1798 and the breaking of the seventh seal will occur at the end of the thousand years.
4. The contents of the Book of Life will be revealed *at the end* of the thousand years.

There is a close relationship between the contents of the Book of Life and the breaking of the seven seals. The Book of Life contains a prerecorded history of life, and the breaking of each seal does two things. First, a new revelation about Jesus occurs as each seal is broken. Second, as each seal is broken, God’s children move closer (both chronologically and intellectually) to the resolution of the sin problem. So, what new truths about Jesus have been discovered since 1798? Before I respond to this question, please review the first four seals.

**Seal #1 – White Horse**

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts [the one that had the face of a lion] saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” (Revelation 6:1, 2, KJV, insertion mine)

**Seal #2 – Red Horse**

“And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast [the one that had the face of an ox] say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.” (Revelation 6:3, 4, KJV, insertion mine)

**Seal #3 – Black Horse**

“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast [the one having the face of a man] say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” (Revelation 6:5, 6, KJV, insertion mine)

**Seal #4 – Pale or Dappled Horse**

“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast [the one that had the face of an eagle] say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the Earth.” (Revelation 6:7, 8, KJV, insertion mine)

These eight verses speak volumes with very few words. (If only I could write the same way. Smile.) The first four seals describe four tasks assigned to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is represented as four living creatures, and the four living creatures are represented as four horsemen. These representations of the same thing enable us to understand the diverse work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

As Jesus breaks each of the first four seals, He gives a command to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit invites John to “come and see” His actions. Many people have heard of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, but their understanding has been distorted by preachers and artists who have painted scary and grotesque pictures of the four horsemen. Few people have any idea why four horsemen are part of this vision, even though the solution to this mystery is quite simple.

**Royal Horses and Royal Horsemen**

In ancient times, there were no telephones, faxes, satellites, high speed internet connections, televisions, or radios. In those days, kings

dispatched “couriers” on fast horses throughout their kingdoms to deliver laws, edicts, bulletins, political directives and other information that was pertinent to the administration of the kingdom. The person in charge of the couriers lived in or near the king’s residence so the king could dispatch royal couriers at a moment’s notice. The king’s commands could have no delay. Royal couriers rode special horses that had been bred and trained for stamina because the king’s provinces could be hundreds of miles away from the throne.

For example, during the time of Queen Esther, King Artaxerxes naively issued a decree which allowed the Persians – at an appointed time – to kill all of the Jews and take their possessions. (Esther 3:9-11) But, the queen learned of the plot and she cleverly exposed wicked Haman. Haman had masterminded the plan because he hated the Jews, especially her uncle, Mordecai. When King Artaxerxes discovered that he had been duped into granting a decree to kill all of his wife’s people, he had Haman hung on the gallows which Haman had prepared for Mordecai. The king asked Mordecai to write an emergency edict which was sent to all the Jews throughout his kingdom, notifying them that they were to take up arms and defend themselves. **“Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king’s signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, *who rode fast horses especially bred for the king.* The king’s edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate any armed force of any nationality or province that might attack them and their women and children; and to plunder the property of their enemies . . . . The couriers, riding the royal horses, raced out, spurred on by the king’s command . . . .”** (Esther 8:10-14, italics mine) The parallel should be obvious. As horsemen were dispatched from the throne room of King Artaxerxes, four horsemen are dispatched from God’s throne as Jesus breaks the first four seals. God used the imagery of horses and riders because this was how couriers were used in John’s day. In short, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse represent the Holy Spirit who is sent on four missions.

According to Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy, the use of parallel language within the Bible is highly important. Parallel language helps to clarify the intended meaning of language found in Revelation. As you read the following passage, notice the number and color of the horses. The horses in Zechariah 6 resemble the horses in Revelation 6. The prophet Zechariah wrote, **“I looked up again – and there before me were four chariots coming out from between two mountains –**

mountains of bronze! The first chariot had red horses, the second black, the third white, and the fourth dappled – all of them powerful. I asked the angel who was speaking to me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ The angel answered me, ‘These are the four spirits of Heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world. The one with the black horses is going toward the north country, the one with the white horses toward the west, and the one with the dappled horses toward the south.’ When the powerful horses went out, they were straining to go throughout the Earth. And he said, ‘Go throughout the Earth!’ So they went throughout the Earth. Then he called to me, ‘Look, those going toward the north country have given my spirit rest in the land of the north.’ ” (Zechariah 6:1-8)

Around 510 B.C., God gave the prophet Zechariah this vision showing how His will is accomplished on Earth. Zechariah saw God send out the four spirits, who stood before His throne, into Earth. The four spirits are the four living creatures. They were represented to Zechariah as four horses going toward the north, south, east and west, and in this vision, their task was to restore peace on Earth. Zechariah particularly noted the horse that went toward “the north country” because this was the direction from which God’s wrath came against Israel. (See Chapter 4; Isaiah 41; Leviticus 26:24, 25; Jeremiah 1:14; 15:3,12; 51:48; Ezekiel 1:4; Zechariah 1:19-21.) At other times, God sends a spirit of peace throughout Earth and the Holy Spirit is the means through which the will of God is accomplished. For example, God raised up Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem because of its degeneracy, and after Israel had served seventy years in captivity, the Holy Spirit moved Cyrus to set Israel free at just the right time. **“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing.”** (2 Chronicles 36:22, italics mine)

Even though Zechariah 6 does not mention riders on the horses, the point remains that the four living creatures who stand before the throne of God were represented to Zechariah as horses with the same four colors found in Revelation 6. Understand that the Holy Spirit is not actually four living creatures or four horses. God creates these caricatures of the Holy Spirit so that human beings can understand something about divine processes and powers that exist outside the realm of human understanding and ability.

### Four Horns and Four Craftsmen

Perhaps one more sample of parallel language will make the connection between the four living creatures and the Holy Spirit more clear. Notice these verses from a vision recorded in Zechariah 1: **“Then I looked up – and there before me were four horns! I asked the angel who was speaking to me, ‘What are these?’ He answered me, ‘These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.’ Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen. I asked, ‘What are these [four craftsmen] coming to do?’ He answered, ‘These are the [four] horns that scattered Judah so that no one could raise his head, but the [four] craftsmen have come to terrify them [the enemies of Jerusalem] and throw down these horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people.’ ”** (Zechariah 1:18-21, insertions mine) This vision reveals an awesome truth. The four horns that brought down Jerusalem was not King Nebuchadnezzar. The four horns (or four powers) that brought down Jerusalem were the four living creatures. The Holy Spirit aroused King Nebuchadnezzar to accomplish God’s will and the Holy Spirit delivered Jerusalem into the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar! (Daniel 5:18, 19) God told Jeremiah, **“ ‘I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin.’ ”** (Jeremiah 25:9)

It is interesting that God calls Nebuchadnezzar “my servant” in Jeremiah 25:9 even though the king did not recognize the God of Israel as the Most High God until many years later. The Holy Spirit punished God’s people by arousing Nebuchadnezzar, and the angel told Zechariah that four craftsmen would rebuild the city. In other words, God told the Holy Spirit to raise a destroyer for Jerusalem, and He did. Then, God told the Holy Spirit to set His people free, and He did. Cyrus issued the decree right on time! (2 Chronicles 36:22) Then, God told the Holy Spirit to raise a builder so that Jerusalem might be rebuilt, and He did. **“So he said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel [the rebuilders]: ‘Not by might nor by [human] power, but by my Spirit,’ [You will overcome the obstacles and rebuild the temple.] says the Lord Almighty. ‘What are you, O mighty mountain [of obstacles]? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground [and enable his success].’ ”** (Zechariah 4:6, 7, insertions mine)

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### Putting It Together

When we compare parallel language from the books of Esther and Zechariah with Revelation 6, the mystery of the four living creatures is easily resolved. The four living creatures represent the Holy Spirit. He is the omnipresent “Enabler” through whom the will of God is accomplished on Earth. Now we know *when* the Book of Life was written, *why* the Book of Life was written, who the four living creatures are, why the Holy Spirit is represented as four couriers on horseback, and when Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life; now we can now examine the seven seals to learn how Jesus will resolve the sin problem and exonerate the government of God!

### Seal #1 – White Horse – 1798 – The Salvation of Jesus Proclaimed

**“I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.”** (Revelation 6:1, 2) The English translation of these verses can mislead the reader. The Greek text indicates the horseman rode out of Heaven’s temple carrying a *toxon*,<sup>1</sup> that is, a winner’s ribbon, an ornamental bow made of fabric. The rider also carries a *stephanos*, a crown of laurel, or a crown of victory like an athlete would wear (the rider is not carrying a *diadema* which denotes authority or dominion). The Greek syntax also indicates the work of this horseman takes time and effort. Literally, the Greek says, “the rider went out overcoming that he might overcome.” What is the

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<sup>1</sup> One highly respected authority, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament* by Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich says the Greek word, *toxon*, means a weapon, a bow for arrows. On the other hand, another respected authority, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* says that the Greek word #5115 means a bow made of fabric. Both meanings of *toxon* will fit into this scene of a rider bent on conquest. Apparently, the Holy Spirit rode out of Heaven’s temple to engage in a spiritual war – in a conquest to exalt Jesus as the Savior of the world. In this sense, a bow for arrows (although arrows are not mentioned in this passage) could be figuratively appropriate. On the other hand, Strong’s definition for *toxon* seems to fit better if we understand the bow is a “winner’s ribbon” offered to those who overcome the world through faith in Christ. I prefer the ribbon over a bow for arrows because the crown in this passage is a *stephanos* (Greek: a crown of victory) – not a *diadema* (Greek: a crown of authority).

Holy Spirit attempting to overcome? Would you believe the two greatest enemies of truth are arrogance and ignorance? According to Revelation 4:7, the first living creature had the face of a lion. As you will see, this face describes “the relentless conquest” of the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to the world. (See Numbers 23:24 for the characteristics of a lion.) The success of the Holy Spirit will be revealed at the Second Coming when a large number of saints “go marching in!”

### **Seven Campaigns**

I like to think of the breaking of the seven seals as seven campaigns, with each campaign having a set of unique disclosures, processes, objectives and results. To win public office, politicians conduct political campaigns. A political campaign is *a process* which the candidate undertakes to win recognition and favor for himself. Politicians travel around the nation to be seen and heard. They make promises and ask voters to put their faith in them. In a similar way, the seven seals are seven unique campaigns that Jesus conducts to resolve the sin problem and exonerate God’s government. Jesus undertakes seven campaigns that dovetail into one grand climax. During these seven campaigns, Jesus is seeking recognition. He wants to be seen and heard. He wants to win the affection of the people of Earth because He alone can save us from the penalty and consequences of sin! Long ago, Jesus traveled to Earth to make a number of promises to the human race and He asks us to trust that He will fulfill His promises. Of course, there are several differences between putting faith in a politician and putting faith in Jesus. When we put faith in a politician, we believe that he will do good things *for* us. When we put our faith in Jesus, we believe that He will not only do good things for us, but He will also do good things *through* us.

After Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life in 1798, He immediately broke the first seal. Because this world is in darkness about God, He initiated a campaign to overcome the arrogance and ignorance of this world. The first campaign is an offer of salvation and everyone who submits to the terms and conditions of His offer will be gathered up at the Second Coming. Jesus’ victory at the Second Coming will be bittersweet. Many people for whom Jesus died will not receive Him. Even though Jesus is not willing that anyone should perish (2 Peter 3:9), human beings have the power of choice.

Because of man’s arrogance and ignorance, Jesus is the most hated God on Earth today. The world hates Jesus because Jesus offends our carnal nature more than any other God. He has made claims that are just too



hard for non-Christians to swallow. Many so-called Christians would also reject the teachings of Jesus (if they knew them) because His demands are hard to accept. Even though Jesus is widely hated, He loves us and offers to save us from the penalty of sin. He understands our darkness, diversity, arrogance, ignorance, prejudice and paradigms, and in spite of these things, He loved each one of us enough to die for us. **“For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”** (Romans 5:10) The point is that Jesus will conduct seven campaigns to win as many souls as possible. These campaigns will carefully separate the sheep from the goats in every religious body, and in the end, Jesus will exonerate the government and reveal the love of God. Just as Jesus removed our guilt through His death, He will remove Lucifer’s reproach on the Father’s character by proving that Lucifer is a liar!

### Root Problem

The seven seals are carefully laid campaigns that address certain problems and issues. Before we examine the first seal, a short review about man’s condition and position before God is necessary; otherwise, the first three seals may not mean as much to you as they should.

Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, but after they sinned, they lost the nature of God. (This is why we have to be born again – to receive God’s nature.) Instead of having a propensity for righteousness (like our Creator), they suddenly had a propensity for rebellion against God’s ways (like the devil). The curse of sin was conveyed to Cain, the first child of Adam and Eve. It is ironic that Lucifer was the first of God’s creation and Cain was the first of Adam’s creation. Jesus said of Lucifer, **“He was a murderer from the beginning.”** (John 8:44) What comparison can be drawn between these two murderers? Why does sin produce murderers? Murder is the only thing among mortals that resolves the question of authority. Sinners cannot tolerate anyone, including God, who constantly thwarts the demands of a self-seeking heart. Therefore, murder is sin’s solution to the question of sovereign authority.

When people justify murder in the name of God, their actions prove that Lucifer is their God. Jesus said to the Jews, **“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. . . .”** (John 8:44) Distorted views of God are formed in ignorance and defended by arrogance. History reveals that

more wars have been fought in the name of God than for any other reason. The root problem with religion is man's "egocentric view of God." Every religious system is both arrogant and ignorant, and these components can ruin an otherwise decent person. When pressed to its core belief, the egocentric view of God says, "My understanding of God and His will is better than your understanding of God and His will. My church has the truth about God and yours does not. My God is the greatest God and He is more powerful than your God. If you insult my God or my beliefs, I will defend my God by inflicting harm on you so that my God will not be diminished by an unbeliever. I know God best. My God is the only true God, and therefore, I will defend the name of God from infidels and blasphemers." These comments reflect pure ignorance and arrogance. The last resort of false religion is force. Any person would have to agree that a God who depends on human protection is very weak.

The population of the world has become very dense in some areas and because human beings have cherished ideas about God, religious tensions are erupting with increasing violence. It is very difficult for religiously diverse people to discuss their religious differences without denigrating each other. Egocentric religion causes people to look on others with contempt and hatred. Religion is a powerful force in the world and most people would rather die for their religion than change it. In fact, I have seen statistics indicating that less than five percent of the world's population changes religious systems. If this is true, it indicates that religion is the second most powerful force on Earth. Of course, the most powerful force on Earth is death.

### **We Cannot Hear Each Other**

Can a Jew tell a Catholic the truth about God? Can a Moslem tell a Jew the truth about God? Can a Hindu tell a Baptist the truth about God? Can a Mormon tell a Jehovah's Witness about God? Of course not! Contrary to what evangelicals say, Jesus is not frustrated or distressed by man's religious diversity because He takes full responsibility for it. When He separated the people of Earth at the Tower of Babel, Jesus knew what He was doing and He foreknew the outcome of His actions. (Genesis 11:8; Acts 17:26, 27)

This section on the first seal includes these issues because the first seal is a campaign to rescue the sheep of God, and *we know from Scripture that there are sincere and honest people in every religious system on Earth.* (John 10:16; Romans 2:13-16; 3:29, 30) We also know there are wicked people in every religious system on Earth. The Bible indicates

the ratio is one-third sheep and two-thirds goats. (Zechariah 13:8, 9) Human beings cannot accurately read the motives of the heart; therefore, they cannot tell sheep from goats. (God alone knows our hearts. 1 Kings 8:39) Jesus began a campaign in 1798 that will ultimately allow the final generation to determine whether they are sheep or goats. This is interesting because Jesus does not judge who is a sheep and who is a goat during the Great Tribulation. Instead, a series of tests will determine the answer!

A person might ask, “Since God already knows the contents of our hearts, why does He insist on putting us through the test that is coming upon the whole world?” (Revelation 3:10) The answer is simple. How could Jesus condemn anyone to death on the basis of foreknowledge? Can you imagine Jesus saying to a wicked person at the Great White Throne judgment scene in Revelation 20, “Well, I could not save you because I knew what your choice would be if I tested you during the Great Tribulation?” Of course not. Jesus said, **“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”** (Revelation 22:12) Notice that Jesus does not reward people for what they believe. We will be rewarded for what we do because our faith is revealed by our actions. (James 2:26) Paul wrote, **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”** (2 Corinthians 5:10) Notice that Paul said we will receive our reward for things “done” instead of things “believed.” The point is that the inhabitants of Earth will be tested during the Great Tribulation, with the terms and conditions of salvation, because God’s generous offer is ours to accept or reject.

According to Revelation, the separation of sheep and goats will occur during the Great Tribulation. At the appointed time, Jesus will select and empower 144,000 people who will come from every religious group on Earth. These people will be selected and chosen on the basis of their hearts – not their religion. Their love for God and man will be the basis of their selection. These people are identified as coming from the twelve tribes of Israel in Revelation 7:4 because they will have *hearts like Abraham*. You may recall that Jacob was renamed “Israel” after he became humble and showed true remorse for his sins. (Genesis 32:28) This is why the redeemed are called the children of Abraham! (Genesis 15:5) You may also recall that Jesus defined our genealogy according to our actions. In other words, if we act like the devil, then our father is the devil. On the other hand, if we humbly put our faith in

Christ as Abraham did, “to go – to be – to do” as Jesus directs, then we are the sons of Abraham! (John 8:38-44; Galatians 3:28, 29) The point is that there are “sons of Abraham” in every religious system on Earth, although they are not formally called Jews. (Romans 2:13-29)

Jesus will personally appear to the 144,000 in a glorious vision, and He will give them a prepared script, a book of words, to speak during the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 10:1-7) The 144,000 will not speak their own words. They will speak like Ezekiel, who was given a prepared script, a book containing words that he was to speak to Israel. (Ezekiel 2 & 3) As a result of their encounter with Jesus, some of the 144,000 will suddenly become “Hindu believers in Christ” and they will speak to their fellow Hindus about the terms and conditions of salvation through Jesus. Similarly, “Moslem believers in Christ” will speak to their Moslem brothers about the terms and conditions of salvation through Jesus, just as “Jewish believers in Christ” will speak to their Jewish brothers about the terms and conditions of salvation through Jesus. The irony is that “Protestant believers in Christ” will speak to their Protestant brothers about the terms and conditions of salvation through Jesus, and most of them (two-thirds) will refuse the testimony of Jesus at the same rate as Moslems, Hindus and Jews! Because one religion cannot speak to another, Jesus will avoid man’s egocentric view of God by having “brothers” speak to brothers. I call this end time solution to presenting the gospel a “theo-centric view of God” because it is God-centered. In essence, it robs denominations of their arrogance and highlights their ignorance. No religious system will be able to claim or receive credit for presenting the gospel of Jesus to the world!

Given the enormous prejudice against Jesus found in the world’s religions, you may wonder, “How will the 144,000 be able to speak to their brothers about Jesus?” The answer is simple. A sudden outbreak of God’s horrific judgments (the first four trumpets) will kill hundreds of millions of people, and the crisis that follows will humble the whole world to a point where every ear will thoughtfully consider the powerful declarations and miracle working powers of the 144,000. By empowering “enlightened” brothers to speak to their brothers in darkness, God will have 144,000 servants who understand the culture, religion and language of each nation. By ignoring the pompous claims and bamboozle of religious systems, Jesus will be able to speak to each religious group within its own mind set. The 144,000 will deliver the testimony of Jesus and they will declare that Jesus Christ is coming soon to gather up His sheep. They will explain that Jesus is profoundly concerned about our response to His authority. Our response to truth reveals whether we are submissive to God or rebellious against God. Theo-centric sheep will

say, “Lord, whatever you want me to do, I will gladly do.” Egocentric goats will say, “This is not the voice of God. There is safety in numbers. I will obey my leader.”

Humanity’s egocentric ways will be completely revealed during the Great Tribulation. When God’s judgments begin, the religions of the world will be forced to swallow some pride (arrogance). Their silence on these coming judgments will prove they know nothing about God’s Word or His plans. To cover up their ignorance, they will participate in a crisis government that will form to appease God. (If religious leaders understood the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, they would not participate in the crisis government that will form as a result of God’s coming judgments!) In an attempt to justify God’s actions, self-righteous people from each religious system will declare that wicked people are responsible for God’s wrath, and with hundreds of millions of people lying dead in the streets, what will the wicked people be able to say?

Self-righteous, churchgoing people will insist that laws with severe penalties must be implemented to reduce sinful behaviors, and befuddled politicians will quickly oblige. In light of the overwhelming destruction all around, what else can they do? The religious leaders of the world will conclude that God must be worshiped and revered, and in this context, they will seek laws demanding respect for God and the worship of God. When the 144,000 and their followers refuse to obey the laws implemented to appease God, they will be associated with “the wicked people” who have angered God. Both groups will be persecuted with harsh civil penalties for refusing to worship God according to the laws demanded by the religious leaders.

The message of the 144,000 will be hard to obey because the testimony of Jesus will stand in direct opposition to the laws which have been established. Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, Moslems, Jews, and pagans alike will struggle with the testimony of the 144,000, because the demands of Jesus will be powerfully clear, but contrary to what is traditionally believed and taught. Even more, the demands of Jesus will be contrary to the laws of the land. In this juxtaposition of conflicting laws, a large number of people will prove to be sheep. The net result is that Moslems will not become Protestants, and Protestants will not become Hindus, etc. Many people will become “believers” in Christ through the testimony of the 144,000, just like many early Jews became Jewish “believers” in Christ through the testimony of His disciples. God has carefully designed the separation of sheep and goats so that the playing field during the Great Tribulation will be level for everyone. Every person on Earth will experience *the same level* of difficulty of

living by faith in Christ. Winning the heart of the Hindu will be no easier than winning the heart of the Protestant.

### **Trusteeship of the Gospel Changes**

When Jesus delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery, He had a glorious purpose for them. Israel was to be a light unto the Gentiles, but Israel repeatedly failed. So, Jesus took the trusteeship of the gospel from the Jews (Matthew 23:38) and gave it to the Christians. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Unfortunately, Christians have also failed. So, Jesus took the trusteeship of the gospel from the Catholic Church and gave it to the Protestant Church in 1798. But, Protestants have failed, too. The final trusteeship of the gospel will be given to the 144,000. Like Gideon's tiny band of three hundred, the 144,000 will succeed in their mission because they will be sealed. (The sealing mentioned in Revelation 7 is the removal of the sinful nature. For a discussion on the importance and meaning of the sealing, please see Chapter 6 in my book, *Jesus, The Alpha and The Omega*.)

After the 144,000 are sealed, the Holy Spirit will work through them in a most dramatic way for 1,260 days. (Revelation 11:3)

Remember that God has sheep and goats in every religious system, and He has been able to bring good things out of religious systems that fell into apostasy. For example, the Jews gave us the Old Testament. The Catholics gave us the New Testament and Protestants discovered the five essential teachings of Jesus. The 144,000 will use the Old Testament, the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus to lead God's Sheep through the Great Tribulation, helping them pass the test of faith and receive the seal of God!

For reasons that are forthcoming, the first three seals have been broken and, as a result, we now have information about Jesus, our King and High Priest, that is as fresh as manna from Heaven! This information comes to us in the form of five essential Bible doctrines. *Protestants began globally preaching the first of these five doctrines after the fall of the papacy in 1798.* I am not saying these five essential doctrines suddenly became true in 1798. Truth is always true, but truth is not always known or widely understood. For example, salvation through faith in Jesus has always been true, but not always known or widely understood.

Even though these five doctrines have been true for ages, they could not be widely known or understood until Jesus began campaigning to overcome man's arrogance and ignorance. Unfortunately, the Catholic

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Church does not endorse the five essential doctrines, and in fact, most Protestant churches today do not endorse all five doctrines either. Just because Hindus, Moslems, Jews, Catholics and Protestants do not understand or accept them, does not prevent these five teachings of Jesus from being true. During the Great Tribulation, these five essential Bible truths will be presented to the world. The five essential Bible doctrines (or the five S's) are:

1. **S**alvation through faith in Christ
2. The **S**tate of man in death
3. The **S**econd Coming
4. God's seventh day **S**abbath
5. God's use of parallel **S**anctuaries or temples

### **Seventy-Three Percent of the World is Not Christian**

When Jesus broke the first seal, the Holy Spirit came to Earth and gave power to the message that salvation comes through faith in Jesus. How can this message be a *new* revelation in 1798 if salvation through faith in Jesus has been proclaimed ever since He returned to Heaven? The answer may surprise you. At the present time, the American Bible Society says approximately 73% of the world does not recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Other Christian organizations estimate the number is closer to 66%. Nevertheless, the actual statistic speaks volumes. Christians have been telling the world that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, for almost 2,000 years, and at the present time, less than one-third of the world claims to be Christian. How is it that more than two-thirds of the people alive on Earth right now have not had a chance to thoughtfully consider the gospel of Christ, or if they have heard it, why did they reject it? The answer to this question is simple. The power of religion keeps people from considering ideas that are religiously different. Moslems cannot tell Baptists about God and Mormons cannot tell Episcopalians about God, etc.

You may say, "But, the idea that salvation comes through faith in Christ was not a new revelation in 1798." A review of church history<sup>1</sup> reveals otherwise. When a person surveys the history of the Christian Church,

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<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ began unfolding the day Adam and Eve sinned. Abel was the first casualty of faith in Christ. (Hebrews 11:4) Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Moses put their faith in Christ. (Hebrews 11:6-26) Christ led Israel out of Egypt and provided food and

(Continued on Next Page)



the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ was missing for more than a thousand years. In its place, the Catholic Church substituted a doctrine that taught salvation comes through the *Church of Christ*. This subtle but deadly deflection from the truth began soon after Jesus returned to Heaven. For centuries, the truth about salvation was buried in the traditions and teachings of the Church, and it was not until military power broke the authority of the Catholic Church in 1798 that *the truth* about salvation, through faith in Christ, could be *widely* proclaimed to the world!

### **“And on This Rock I Will Build My Church”**

Between A.D. 538 and 1798, the clergy of the Catholic Church lorded “divine authority” over the nations of Europe by imposing two false doctrines on the people. (A brief discussion on the meaning of Matthew 16:13-19, one of the texts used by Catholics to defend claims of papal authority, is located at the end of the discussion on this third seal.)

1. First, the pope claimed to be the appointed successor of Peter and so he held the highest and most honorable position on Earth. The Church claimed that God spoke only through the pope because he was the vicar of Christ on Earth. (Later on, this claim became the foundation of papal infallibility.) The Church also claimed that Jesus had given Peter and his successors “the keys of the kingdom.” Eventually, Pope Gregory VII (1028-1085) defined “the keys of the kingdom” to mean that everyone on Earth, including kings and

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water for His people in the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 10:4) From the beginning of sin until the end of salvation’s offer (Revelation 22:11), everyone who willfully surrenders to the authority of Jesus receives the gift of His righteousness, and through His righteousness, salvation is possible. (Genesis 3:21; Romans 1:17, 3:21, 22; 6:23; Revelation 19:8) During the Jewish era (1437 B.C.-A.D. 33) and Catholic era (A.D. 538 - 1798), this sublime truth was alive, but it was underground. After the Jews and Catholics were taken out of the way, and the Protestants received the trusteeship of the gospel, the message of salvation through faith in Jesus came out of hiding. It subsequently claimed six percent of the world’s population. (Today, 400 million Protestants make up six percent of the world’s population. Of course, the actual number of born again Protestants is substantially less than 400 million.) In this respect, *church history reflects the corporate actions of the Christian Church whose headquarters were in Rome*. It was not the church invisible, or the underground believers who faithfully obeyed the Word of God through the ages.

queens, were subservient to the authority of the pope. In other words, the pope and his priests had authority over eternal life.

2. The second false doctrine was the necessity of sacraments. The church taught that if a person refused to receive the sacraments or was excommunicated so that he could not receive the sacraments, that person would go to Hell and burn forever. Therefore, ignorant laymen submitted to the outlandish demands of Catholic clergy to avoid being sent to Hell. In effect, the clergy held the laity hostage and any ransom demanded by the clergy was produced. This situation was the straw that broke the camel's back. When Tetzel offered forgiveness of sins for money, Martin Luther could not tolerate the tactics of the Church any longer and he protested by nailing his complaints to the church door (the ninety-five theses).

History confirms the Church aggressively defended these two doctrines because together, they secured enormous power and leverage for the Church over kings and nations. The actions of the Church of Rome should not be surprising. Whether in matters pertaining to church or state, those who have possession of power will do whatever it takes to hold on to power. This is the selfish egocentric nature of man. The history of the Jews and the history of Christianity share an interesting parallel. God gave both populations the trusteeship of the gospel. Both endured for more than a thousand years. Both religions began with good-hearted people, and both ended in apostasy and in opposition to God's truth. This is not a statement about Jews and Catholics. This is a statement about human nature. I have often said that if God had chosen Ishmael instead of Isaac, the names of the people would have changed, but the results would have been identical.

### **Salvation through Faith in Christ Rediscovered**

When Martin Luther (1483-1546) nailed his ninety-five theses to the church door in 1517, the Roman Catholic Church was stirred, but not alarmed. How could a priest in Germany threaten the mighty Church of Rome? However, Luther's protest against Rome can be compared to Samson's destruction of the Philistine temple. (Judges 16:30) When Samson gained enough strength to push the main pillars of the Philistine temple out of their places, the temple collapsed. Similarly, when Protestantism gained enough strength, it pushed the two main pillars of Catholicism (papal authority and the necessity of sacraments) out of their places and the Catholic Church fell. On the basis of Bible discovery, Protestants denied the claims of the pope and this explains, in part, the historical conflict between Protestants and Catholics today.

**The Apostle Paul of the Protestant Reformation**

Protestant historians have conferred the title, “Father of the Protestant Reformation” on John Wycliff (1330-1384) because Wycliff was the first reformer within the Catholic Church to significantly challenge Rome’s departure from Bible truth. If Wycliff is the father of Protestantism, then Martin Luther should be called “the Apostle Paul” of the Reformation. I say this because Paul and Luther were highly educated and they stand out in history for having accomplished the *same* thing. Both men created an exodus from two corrupt religious systems, Judaism and Catholicism, respectively, using the authority of Scripture.

Luther entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt in 1505 and he took the vow of obedience, poverty and chastity in the following year. By 1512, Luther had earned a doctoral degree. In 1515, at the age of 32, he was made vicar over eleven Augustinian monasteries. Luther was serious about serving the Lord and His church. As Luther matured in his understanding of the Bible, he became concerned about a number of doctrines which the Church endorsed. Eventually, a wedge of discernment divided the devotions of Luther. Even though he loved the Lord and the Church, Luther had carefully documented ninety-four issues within the Church that needed reform. When the priest, Tetzel, came to town in 1517 boastfully offering to sell forgiveness of sins for a price, Luther was outraged. Tetzel was raising money to pay for the construction of St. Peter’s Basilica by selling salvation for a price. This was too much. Luther added this behavior to his long list and with a soul full of disgust, he nailed his ninety-five complaints to the church door in Wittenberg on October 31.

As a young priest, Luther did not question the idea that Church authority was greater and higher than the teachings of the Bible. However, after comparing the teachings of the Church with the Bible, Luther realized the Bible must be continually asserted and exalted above the authority of the Church. Otherwise, the carnal nature of man would eventually manipulate or corrupt the teachings of Christ. Luther also became convinced that mankind is justified before God through Christ without the necessity of works and a shocking experience confirmed his belief. Sometime between 1512 and 1515, Pope Leo X offered an indulgence (the forgiveness of sins) to people who would climb Pilate’s staircase on their knees. Because Luther sincerely wanted freedom from the guilt of sin, he decided to climb the staircase even though he was already struggling with the relationship between faith and works. While climbing the staircase, he heard a thunderous voice say, “The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:17) It was an epiphany! Suddenly, everything

he had been studying in the Bible connected. In a flash he realized that salvation came through faith in Christ alone – without sacraments or works of penance – and he stood to his feet and departed the building in shame and haste.

In April 1521, Luther was summoned before Church officials at Worms to defend his radical teachings and behavior. He was accused of forty-one errors and given sixty days to recant. Of course, the Church could not accept Luther's call for reform because his reformation would weaken the "God given" authority of the Church. When Luther saw that church officials had not examined his books and they would never accept the plainest teachings of Scripture, he spoke to the assembly saying, "Here I stand. I can do no other . . . my conscience is captive to the Word of God." Luther was condemned to death, but he escaped with his life.

Even though Luther's call for reformation did not reform the Church, he did catch the ear of the laity. Laymen were weary of the fear and the burdens which the Church imposed on them. Luther knew the laymen were in spiritual darkness because they did not have access to the Bible. So, Luther translated the New Testament into the vernacular language of the German people in 1522. This was the dawning of a new day. The Church had forbidden possession of the Bible and people caught with Bibles were severely punished, tortured, or killed.

Luther's activities in Germany added to the swell across Europe for reformation within the Church. Two hundred eighty-one years after posting his ninety-five theses to the church door at Wittenberg, the authority of the Catholic Church was toppled because it would not reform. In February 1798, Napoleon's forces captured the area currently known as Vatican City, the pope was dethroned, and was taken prisoner by Generals Waller and Berthier. The elimination of papal power enabled Protestants to speak freely about salvation through faith in Christ. At last, they could teach and preach without intimidation or threat from the Catholic Church. Protestants began to share the good news that salvation was not dependent on church or priest! Salvation came through faith in Jesus alone. There is nothing more powerful than a truth whose time has come. When we remember that the Church of Rome fell because "judgment was pronounced in favor of the saints of the Most High" (Daniel 7:22), and that Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life in 1798, we find an interesting effect on Earth. Jesus broke the first seal on the Book of Life and the power of Jesus' gospel broke out of the tomb of darkness where it had been sealed for 1,260 years!

### The United States Provided Sanctuary

To ensure the growth of Protestantism and the fulfillment of His purposes after 1798, God had prepared a new nation to provide sanctuary for Protestantism. The Pilgrims came to America for several reasons, one of which was religious freedom. Many Lutherans also came to America and they established their first church on Manhattan Island in 1648. Twenty-two years before the papacy fell, the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. No one in Philadelphia could have anticipated the development and the accomplishments for Christ that the United States of America would fulfill. The book of Revelation predicted this phenomenon and it will be discussed when we examine Revelation 12:16. The Holy Spirit raised the United States by giving it a marvelous Constitution and an amazing Bill of Rights ensuring religious freedom for everyone. Protestant immigrants were drawn to this nation by the millions. Because the population of the United States was predominantly Protestant in those early days, Catholics who settled here were often scorned and mistreated. In fact, Catholics were not elected to public office for many years. (The first Catholic president in the U.S. was John F. Kennedy, 1960-1963.)

Since 1798, the United States has produced more Christian missionaries, gospel workers, and literature proclaiming “salvation through faith in Jesus Christ” than any other nation in Earth’s history. Of course, the Holy Spirit is still pushing “the good news” of salvation through faith in Jesus, even though Protestantism has mutated into a deep and horrible apostasy. Protestantism has lost its love for and fidelity to the Word of God. It became weak and confused after World War II because it did not press deeper into the Bible for truth. Protestants became materialistic following in the apostasy of Rome. It displaced the teachings of Jesus with the teachings of fallen man. Unfortunately, America has forgotten its Creator and Benefactor. This nation has focused on the gifts rather than The Giver. Most citizens are consumed with the acquisition of wealth and the pursuit of happiness and pleasure; sexual immorality is rampant. Perplexities and social problems are on every horizon. The spirit of America has dimmed because the Spirit of God has been grieved. In spite of our nation’s corporate apostasy, the gospel of Jesus is still alive. Although weak, the cry of the reformation still rings out: **“Salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone.”** There is “a crown of victory and a winner’s ribbon” for everyone who submits to the authority of Jesus and overcomes this world through faith in Him. (2 Timothy 4:8) Soon, during the campaign of the fourth and fifth seals, this cry will again swell and fill the whole Earth!

### Summary

The breaking of the first seal in 1798 resulted in the emancipation and empowerment of the Protestant movement. After the fall of the papacy, Protestants were able to proclaim salvation through faith in Jesus without intimidation or persecution from the Church of Rome. The first seal was a great start, but six more campaigns would be necessary! The revelation of Jesus will get brighter and clearer as these campaigns unfold and dovetail together.

### Additional Note on Papal Doctrine

The Catholic Church teaches that the pope is the infallible successor of Peter and that it has the keys of the kingdom of God. Let us briefly examine the following passage and see if Christ's church was built on successors of Peter: **"When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in Heaven.' 'I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven.'" (Matthew 16:13-19)**

Jesus queried the disciples about His identity in order to teach the disciples two impressive lessons. When Peter responded, "You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God," Jesus blessed Peter saying, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah." Notice that Jesus used Peter's formal name because He was about to use Simon's surname to make a profound point. While Peter's words were still reverberating in their ears, Jesus contrasted Peter's humanity with His divinity. Jesus said, "I tell you that you are petros." (The Greek word petros is transliterated "Peter," but it means rock or pebble.) Then, Jesus said, "and on this Petra [Greek: petra, a huge rock] I will build my church." The contrast in language indicates that Jesus pointed to Himself when He spoke these words. Jesus was the vine and they were the branches. (John 15:5) The Son of God who stood before them in dusty sandals was the eternal and awesome "Petra" of the Old Testament. (Genesis 49:24; Deuteronomy 32:4,15; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 18:31; 1 Corinthians 10:4) The disciples

must have shuddered with this reality. Can you imagine hearing about “The Rock of Ages” from the Scriptures all of your life only to discover one day, that “Petra” Himself, garbed in the robe of humanity, is standing in your presence? The faith of the disciples was greatly increased. The Church of Christ would succeed because it was founded on “The Rock” and sustained by His eternal power. The distinction between the pebble (petros) and The Rock of Ages (petra) was unmistakable. Furthermore, there is no evidence in the Bible that the disciples regarded Peter as the head or founder of the Christian Church. In fact, Paul reprimanded Peter for foolish behavior in Galatians 2:11.

Then Jesus taught His disciples a second lesson. He promised them the keys of the kingdom. Jesus said, “Whatever you ‘loose’ or ‘bind’ on Earth will be loosed or bound in Heaven.” The terms, “to bind” or “to loose” means having the authority “to approve or disapprove.” (Isaiah 22:20-23, Revelation 3:7) The “keys of the kingdom” is a phrase that means “having responsible authority.” If you give the keys of your car to a person, he receives the benefit of using your car, but also receives a serious responsibility to operate your car. The parallel is simple. Jesus promised the disciples they would have authority to make the day to day decisions necessary to advance the work of His church, and He assured them that He would honor their decisions in Heaven. Of course, Jesus would only honor their decisions if they followed the leading of the Holy Spirit and built the body of Christ according to the teachings of “The Rock.” (Matthew 28:19, 20) It is important to notice that Jesus did not give His disciples authority to determine the eternal destiny of anyone. That responsibility is not transferrable. Jesus is our Judge. He redeemed us with His own blood and His sacrifice for us gives Him the right to pass judgment on us. (John 5:22, 23; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 5:9; Acts 17:31)

#### **Seal #2 – Red Horse – 1800 – The Teachings of Jesus Rediscovered**

**“When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, ‘Come!’ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the Earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.”** (Revelation 6:3, 4) For reasons that follow, it appears that Jesus broke the second seal around the year 1800. At that time, Jesus gave the Holy Spirit the sword of Truth and sent Him to Earth on a campaign to enlighten the world with two essential doctrines that will be presented later in this section. This endeavor would take a lot of strength.



Perhaps this is why the face of the second living creature looks like an ox. (Revelation 4:7) As the truth about Jesus becomes more clear and powerful, humanity's resistance to it will become more determined and rebellious. Eventually, a time will come when wicked people will kill those who love Jesus and obey His commandments. Jesus warned His disciples about the response of the carnal heart to His teachings by saying, **"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the Earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."** (Matthew 10:34)

According to Rule Three, we should use parallel language from other Bible texts to clarify passages that are cryptic if parallel language exists. Since the second seal is somewhat cryptic, consider the following words of Jesus, **"All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. . . ."** (John 16:1-4) Why did Jesus warn that religious people would persecute and kill His disciples? Jesus made these comments because He wanted His disciples to understand the nature of religion. When religious people are confronted with truth, they react in one of two ways. They either rejoice and submit or they become angry and hostile. This is why God's truth is like a double edged sword. During the Great Tribulation, the saints will be persecuted and put to death because of their loyalty to the Word of God. (Revelation 6:9-11; 13:5-7) Therefore, the campaign of the second seal has something to do with the death of many saints *after* 1798. Speaking of the final days, John wrote, **"I saw that the woman [the great whore] was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished."** (Revelation 17:6) Why were they killed? **"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained."** (Revelation 6:9) What issue puts the Word of God in conflict with the Antichrist? **". . . And [the dragon] caused all who refused to worship the image to be killed."** (Revelation 13:15)

These texts indicate that a time will come when worship will be a serious matter. The Antichrist and his wicked followers will kill those who obey God's law, and the wicked will think they are doing God's will by killing the saints! Keep this thought in mind as we continue to examine the second seal.

### Our Position and Condition before God

The assurance of salvation is the best news a person can hear *after* he understands his position and condition before God. Our true position and condition before God is revealed only through the teachings of Jesus. Jesus said, “. . . **I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**” Our position before God is that of a sinner. (Romans 3:23) Our condition before God is one of natural hostility. (Romans 8:7, 8) The verdict of God’s Word is clear. We are under the curse of sin and we cannot save ourselves from it. The good news is that through the atonement of Jesus, we can escape from the penalty of sin. Furthermore, we can be born again and through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, we can be victorious over our hostility toward God!

Thoughtfully consider the following sentence because it may be a hard one to accept. When salvation through faith in Jesus is separated from the teachings of Jesus, the assurance of salvation becomes “an opiate,” “a sweet nothing,” “a theological fantasy,” which may be wonderful to believe, but practically worthless for overcoming the temptations and trials of the human experience. On the other hand, when the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus is aligned with the other four essential doctrines taught by Jesus, the assurance of salvation will transform it. When we surrender our will to God’s will, we submit to the armor of God. Paul wrote, **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”** (Ephesians 6:12, 13) John wrote, **“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.”** (1 John 5:4)

Additionally, when the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ is separated from the other four essential teachings of Jesus, discipleship suffers and Christianity disintegrates. Many Christians have been led into idolatry without realizing it. Consider the process: When the assurance of salvation is separated from, or exalted above, the importance of being a submissive disciple to the teachings of Christ, human nature will diminish the serious consequences of sin. Soon afterwards, Christians begin doing things which offend God. Sexual immorality and idolatry are twin sisters. When Christians separate the salvation of Jesus from the teachings of Jesus, He becomes a religious

icon instead of the Lord and Master of our lives. Jesus said that we cannot *receive* salvation without *giving* ourselves over to His dominion as an obedient disciple. **“If anyone would come after me [for salvation], he must deny himself and take up his cross [of responsibilities which I will assign] and follow me [my teachings]. For whoever wants to save his life [for eternity] will lose it [that is, will lose control of his life], but whoever loses [gives up control of] his life for me and for the gospel will save it [for all eternity].”** (Mark 8:34, 35, insertions mine) Notice how the apostle Paul summarized the relationship between faith and works, **“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”** (Hebrews 5:7-9)

When salvation through faith in Christ costs nothing, it produces nothing. The problem is that salvation and discipleship are inseparable. Here is a true paradox: *Salvation is totally free through faith in Christ, but discipleship will cost everything you possess.* Jesus told the rich young ruler, **“ . . . Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me.”** At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, **“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”** (Mark 10:21-23)

Jesus did pay the penalty for our sins by dying on the cross and whosoever is willing to submit to the teachings of Jesus (*this* is the true meaning of putting faith in Jesus) shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16) Surrendering to the teachings of Jesus produces “justification.” When we become willing to go, to be and to do all that Jesus requires, we receive the assurance of salvation. Jesus covers our sinful life with His perfect righteousness and we stand before God “justified” – just as though we never sinned. Jesus lived on Earth as one of us to show us how God wants His children to live. Every true disciple of Jesus obediently submits to the discipline and His teachings. (John 15:10; 1 John 2:3; Hebrews 12:5-14) Discipleship is also called “sanctification” which means becoming like Jesus. Judas was not a true disciple of Jesus. Oh yes, he was excited about being a founding member of Christ’s new kingdom. He faithfully followed Jesus around and was numbered among the twelve, but he did not submit to the sanctification which the Master offered and required. Eventually, his love for money and disgust

with Jesus led him to betray his Master.

Just before He departed for Heaven, Jesus told His disciples, **“Therefore go and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to *obey* everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:19, 20, italics mine) The relationship between obedience and faith is summarized by Jesus. The gospel commission centers on making obedient followers of Jesus. The apostles understood the balance between faith and works. James wrote, **“In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”** (James 2:17) Understandably, Martin Luther did not like the book of James (or the book of Revelation). The pendulum of salvation through works needed a serious push toward salvation through faith, and James sounded too “works oriented” for “faith oriented” Luther. So, Luther wanted to leave the books of James and Revelation out of his German translation of the New Testament, but close friends prevailed and Luther included them both. Nevertheless, when you read the book of James, there is a very clear balance between faith and works. James does not teach that works are a prerequisite for salvation. James says, godly works produce evidence there is faith in Christ! (James 2:14-24)

### **Salvation through Christ, Not the Church**

Remember that the Church of Rome eventually led Christians to believe that salvation came through faith in the *Church of Christ* rather than faith in Christ. This transition was not premeditated. Rather, it just happened because of the nature of fallen humanity. The Jews did the same thing during their period of trusteeship and Protestants have done the same thing since 1798. Over time, religious institutions *always* drift away from the teachings of Jesus.

Because God created us, every person is accountable to God for his or her actions, just as a child is accountable to his parents. Regardless of what clergy may say or laymen may believe, God sends the Holy Spirit to every person to lead them toward a more complete understanding of truth. (John 16:13) Here is something hard to swallow: No church speaks for the Holy Spirit and no church has “a corner” on the teachings of Jesus. Are churches free to study God’s Word? Are they free to embrace the teachings of Jesus? Actually, no! Churches are depositories of ideas which denominational pioneers held about God. After the church becomes established, a new generation grows up and attends the church of their childhood without seriously questioning the original ideas

or beliefs. Tradition explains why Judaism, and Catholicism, could not embrace the teachings of Jesus. Tradition also explains why Protestantism cannot embrace the teachings of Jesus. Religion is more sticky than molasses.

I have spent a considerable amount of time emphasizing the importance of salvation through faith in Christ, because the biblical definition of faith is not widely understood or practiced. Faith in Jesus centers around a steadfast commitment to obey the teachings of Jesus at all costs. The matter of discipleship is important in our study on the second seal, because the second seal concerns the advancement of discipleship and regrettably, Christian resistance to it. Jesus said, **“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”** (John 14:15) John put discipleship in perfect balance when he wrote, **“We know that we have come to know Him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know Him,’ but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys His word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.”** (1 John 2:3-6)

### **The Large Sword of the Second Seal**

The apostle Paul said that Scripture is sharper than “a double-edged sword,” for good reason. (Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17) When the teachings of Jesus are presented with power and authority, when sinful behavior is openly rebuked and sin is called by its right name, when evil motives and deeds are exposed by the light of truth shining from God’s Word, it makes rebellious people furious because the Bible offends them. Do not forget that John the Baptist, the greatest of the prophets (Matthew 11:11), lost his life for telling King Herod that he had sinned by taking his brother’s wife. (Mark 6:18) The parallel is that each of us have a bit of King Herod in our hearts. If we had the authority and power, would we kill those who openly rebuke us and expose our sins? Look at the judicial system in many countries today. Consider the ends to which evil doers will go to avoid the embarrassment and humiliation that comes from having their deeds exposed to the light of truth. Revelation predicts that many, if not all of the 144,000, will be killed during the Great Tribulation because of the testimony they deliver. (Revelation 16:4-7) In this sense, the sword of truth cuts both ways. The Bible rebukes sinners and the wicked punish the people who proclaim Bible truth.

An enormous amount of inertia, resistance and hatred in this world is

focused on the teachings of Jesus. Eastern Mystics, Hindus, Moslems, Catholics, Jews, Pagans, Atheists and Protestants are no different when it comes to the authority of Jesus! This should not be surprising. The carnal heart of humanity does not want to surrender its rebellion and submit to His authority. This is especially true when no one else around us is obeying Jesus in the same way the Holy Spirit is leading us. It was distressing for Jesus to confront the rebellion of the Jews, and it is just as hard for His followers to confront the rebellion that surrounds them. Paul wrote, **“The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”** (Romans 8:7, 8) Jesus said, **“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”** (John 3:19-21)

### **The Year 1800**

The year 1800 appears to resolve the question of timing. The first seal was broken in 1798. Remember, the first rule of apocalyptic prophecy requires that the second seal must be broken after the first seal. When the Holy Spirit “rode out” of Heaven’s temple, He immediately began a campaign to translate and distribute the Bible (the sword of truth) throughout the world. The Holy Spirit motivated Protestants to form numerous Bible Societies in Europe and the United States. During the early 1800’s, Protestants gave sacrificially and generously toward the translation and distribution of the Bible because they knew their victory over the Church of Rome came through the exaltation of Bible truth, specifically, the assurance of salvation through faith in Jesus. Because the Bible became increasingly accessible, laymen began to study the “Good Book,” and as they investigated the Bible, they began to understand for themselves Rome’s deep apostasy.

Prior to the fall of the papacy in 1798, few people owned a Bible in Europe. This was either due to the expense, or in some countries, the Church forbade the possession of a Bible through laws enforced by the state. Today, this context seems so foreign. Even the Church of Rome now publishes Bibles, albeit in the archaic Douay version. What produced this marvelous transition from a few Bibles to the sudden appearance of many Bibles following 1800? I can find no better reason than the opening of the second seal. From 1800 to 1844, the Bible (or portions of it) was translated into approximately 112 translations. By



1944, the number of translations exceeded one thousand. Today, the number of translations exceeds 1,500. As people began to read the Bible, various ideas about the teachings of Jesus occurred. Because nineteenth century Protestants were a diverse group of people from the many nations of Europe and the United States, Protestantism fractured into several distinctive denominations after 1798 under the leadership of various godly people.

The Holy Spirit was sent on a campaign to translate and distribute Bibles in the second seal, because there is **no other authoritative source on the teachings of Jesus**. For 200 years, the Bible has been progressing throughout the world, one book at a time. The Bible tells us what sin is and it presents our true condition and position before God. Soon, a time is coming when Bible truth will cause men to slay one another! Without going into a lot of detail at this point, it will happen in the following manner: The opening of the fourth seal will initiate the Great Tribulation. God will send a series of destructive judgments, and during the first thirty to sixty days of the Great Tribulation, more than a billion people will perish! The nations and religions of the world will respond to God's horrific judgments by immediately establishing a crisis government with a broad range of powers. The purpose of this crisis government will be to appease God so that His judgments will cease. This crisis government (called Babylon in Revelation) will have no choice but to mandate the worship of God, by outlawing immoral behavior and imposing other laws that have religious significance. The 144,000 will appear in every nation including Moslem, Hindu and atheist nations like India, China and Russia, and they will begin preaching from the book of Revelation. In this context, the purpose for translating and distributing the Bible during the past 200 years will suddenly mature. Because the Bible is in every nation, it will become *the object* of a global controversy. The Holy Spirit will work mighty miracles through the 144,000 to confirm their testimony, but unfortunately, many of the teachings of Jesus are contrary to the established religions of the world. Thus, the testimony of Jesus will inflame the passions of evil people as it did when Jesus taught on Earth, and if evil doers killed the Master for His testimony, then they will certainly kill His servants.

The horrific judgments of Jesus are designed to open the eyes and ears of all religions. By shattering the religious paradigms and prejudices of people everywhere, the 144,000 will be able to present the authority and demands of Jesus so that people in every religious system will be able to thoughtfully consider what the Bible says. Because of prejudice, this has not been possible. Billions of people will begin to look into the Bible to



verify the claims of the 144,000. People will want to know what Jesus is doing and why He sent the judgments. The whole world will examine and intensely study the books of Daniel and Revelation. The result will be an enormous controversy. People who are sincere and honest will embrace the teachings of Jesus and submit to the laws of our Creator. People who are rebellious and wicked will reject the teachings of Jesus and rebel against Him. *The Bible will separate the sheep from the goats in every religion and cause men to kill one another!* During the fifth trumpet, the devil will physically appear masquerading as Almighty God. He will move quickly to deceive the wicked and set up his kingdom. His forces will kill millions of saints who obey the Word of God. This bloodshed is described in the fifth seal. The Bible says, **“When he [the Lamb] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.”** (Revelation 6:9, insertion and italics mine) Did you notice why the saints were slain?

### **Two More Essential Doctrines in Protestant America**

Even though the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus was rediscovered by Luther around 1515, Protestantism was not set free to proclaim it until 1798. After the Church of Rome fell, Protestantism became a significant Christian force in the world. When the meaning of salvation through faith in Jesus is separated from the larger body of Jesus’ teachings, the assurance of salvation becomes a “theological fantasy,” which may be wonderful to believe, but practically worthless for dealing with the temptations and trials of the human experience. To keep the first essential doctrine on track, Jesus broke the second seal around 1800, and the Holy Spirit was sent to establish Bible Societies in Europe and the United States. The translation, printing and distribution of the Bible was necessary so that all of the teachings of Jesus could be rediscovered. Because the Bible is a treasure trove of 66 books, it takes considerable time and effort to become familiar with its gems of truth. Because the Holy Spirit has been commissioned to guide us into all truth (John 16:13), He gives the Word of God a special attraction. The Bible draws to itself everyone who wants to know God.

When Protestant settlers first came to America from Europe, they brought the first of five essential doctrines – salvation through faith in Jesus. During the nineteenth century, two more of the five essential teachings of Jesus took root in America. These two doctrines were “soul sleep” and “the obligation of the Ten Commandments.” Although mainstream Protestantism in Europe and the United States did not embrace these two doctrines, many people incorporated these doctrines

in their beliefs, and the teachings of Jesus became a little brighter. The rejection of soul sleep and the obligatory nature of the Ten Commandments by mainstream Protestants brings up a point which I have mentioned before: Truth is always true, regardless of who believes it or rejects it, and the fulfillment of prophecy reveals who had the truth!

Dr. Edward White (1819-1898), a Congregationalist minister in Britain, can be credited with uncovering the doctrine of soul sleep. His discovery began with his rejection of John Calvin's (1509-1564) view of predestination. Calvin taught that only a predetermined number of people could be saved and the rest were doomed to suffer in eternal hell. Dr. White argued that God alone is immortal (1 Timothy 6:15, 16), and therefore, the soul of man cannot be immortal. Since the soul is subject to death, the souls of sinners cannot be tormented forever. A few Protestants accepted White's views, and the doctrine of "soul sleep" was added to the "fringe" of Protestantism's theological fabric.

**Note:** The basic idea behind soul sleep is that when a person dies, he is not judged nor does he go to his eternal reward. Instead, when a person dies, his soul "sleeps," that is, there is no awareness or intelligence. The dead await the judgment bar of Christ. (Hebrews 9:27) The dead will rise in one of two resurrections. When Jesus appears at the Second Coming, the righteous dead will be resurrected to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17) and the wicked who are living at that time will be slain by the Lord. (Revelation 19:19-21) At the end of the thousand years of Revelation 20, the wicked dead of all ages will be resurrected to meet their Maker in a great white throne judgment scene. (Revelation 20:12) After the wicked are sentenced for their cruelty to man and rebellion against God, they will be punished with fire and eventually annihilated because the soul is mortal. (Ezekiel 18:4) Protestantism, in general, has rejected this doctrine even though this doctrine is one of the five essential doctrines needed to understand the book of Revelation. Most Protestants today believe, as Catholics do, that at death, people either go to Heaven (or paradise) for eternity or they burn in Hell for eternity.

Another essential doctrine took root in the United States during the nineteenth century. The doctrine of the perpetuity of the Ten Commandments also came from England. This doctrine teaches that God requires man to obey His Ten Commandments, including the observance of the seventh day Sabbath (the fourth commandment). To many Protestants, the observance of the fourth commandment, unlike the other nine commandments, seems contradictory to the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus. In 1664, Stephen Mumford, a member

of the Bell Lane Seventh Day Baptist Church in London, came to Rhode Island. Because he could not find any Seventh Day Baptists, he worshiped with Sunday keeping Baptists for awhile. Eventually, five Baptist families adopted Mumford's view that the Ten Commandments were obligatory and the Seventh Day Baptist Church in the United States began in 1671. By 1802, there were twenty churches with two thousand members in the United States. Increasing numbers of immigrants were arriving in America each month. Because Bibles were available and affordable and the Baptist name was a respected Protestant denomination, interest in the seventh day Sabbath continued to grow. However, Sunday keeping Baptists were strongly opposed (and remain opposed) to the idea that Jesus requires mankind to observe His fourth commandment.

In the Forward of this book and again in Chapter 9, I highlighted the point that the teachings of Jesus center around five essential Bible doctrines because an understanding of these doctrines is a prerequisite for reaching the intended meaning of Revelation. Currently, most Protestants do not appreciate the importance of these five doctrines. Nevertheless, we will discover that Revelation's story mandates an understanding of soul sleep, as well as the perpetuity of the Ten Commandments. Circumstances during the Great Tribulation will force the importance of the five essential doctrines out of obscurity, and the teachings of Jesus, which are plainly stated in the Bible, will make a lot of people very angry.

### **Summary**

The second seal appears to have been broken around 1800. The large sword carried to Earth by the Holy Spirit represents the Bible, which contains the teachings of Jesus. The sudden formation of Bible Societies in Europe and the United States around the year 1800 indicates the Holy Spirit was sent on a campaign to translate and distribute the Bible throughout the world. The translation and distribution of the Bible will produce deadly consequences during the Great Tribulation. We will discover this in our study on the fifth seal.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Bible was flushed out of obscurity. Since that time, it has been translated into 1,500 languages and hundreds of millions of copies have been distributed all over the world. The Bible has been *the* best seller of all books every year since 1800. The doctrines of "salvation through faith in Jesus," "soul sleep" and man's obligation to observe the Ten Commandments, including the

seventh day Sabbath of the fourth commandment, will play crucial roles during the Great Tribulation.

### **Seal #3 – Black Horse – 1844 – The Judgment Bar of Jesus**

**“When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!’ ” (Revelation 6:5, 6)**

I believe the third seal was broken around 1844. At just the right time, the Holy Spirit, in the form of the third living creature, was sent from the throne room on a campaign to inform the world that Jesus had begun to judge the dead. The face of the third living creature is like that of a man. (Revelation 4:7) This face indicates that the Holy Spirit has an assignment requiring divine wisdom. **“To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding. Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right.”** (Proverbs 8:4-6)

The scales in the hand of the rider indicate **“. . . the court was seated and the books were opened.”** (Daniel 7:10) The breaking of the third seal marks the beginning of the judgment bar of Christ! **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”** (2 Corinthians 5:10) The third seal merges soul sleep, the worthiness of Jesus, and the pre-advent judgment into a comprehensive prophetic fulfillment. Of course, if a person does not understand the doctrine of soul sleep, God’s use of parallel temples, or the four rules of interpretation, the breaking of the third seal in 1844 will make very little sense.

The doctrine of parallel temples teaches that long ago, God set a date, near the end of the world, for our High Priest to begin cleansing the temple in Heaven. The temple in Heaven needs cleansing because the record of our sins has defiled it. We have discussed the prophetic precision of 1798 and 1844 at length in this book. We have closely examined the date Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life in Segment III of this chapter, and we have examined the breaking of the first two seals. The orderly progression of the historical matrix is unmistakable.

The cleansing of Heaven's temple is accomplished by transferring the guilt of each person to its final destiny. After investigating the record of each dead person, Jesus decides if that person is wicked or righteous. The guilt of sin remains on the head of the wicked person, or in the case of a righteous person, the guilt is transferred onto the head of the scapegoat. Keep in mind, the Lord's goat (representing Jesus) provided atonement for *the penalty* of sin (Leviticus 16:21), whereas the scapegoat (representing Lucifer) provided atonement for sin's presence. (Leviticus 16:22) Lucifer is the father of sin and, as such, he bears full responsibility for it. (John 8:44) The doctrine of soul sleep teaches that the dead are neither judged, nor do they go to Heaven or Hell at the time of death. We also know that the righteous dead will meet Jesus in the air at the Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17) and the wicked dead will be resurrected at the end of the thousand years. (Revelation 20:5, 6) The unanswered question concerns timing. When are the dead judged? The answer to this question is resolved by the alignment of two essential teachings of Jesus (soul sleep and parallel temples) and the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. Daniel 8:14 tells us the judgment bar of Christ began in 1844, and the breaking of the third seal in Revelation 6:5, 6 aligns with this date.

The Holy Spirit departed the throne room around 1844 on a campaign to inform the world that the judgment of the dead had begun. The scales in the hand of the rider on the horse indicate the judgment of mankind has arrived. **“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”** (Ecclesiastes 12:14) Do not confuse the judgment of mankind with the full cup principle. In a sense, God constantly manages Earth. He passed judgment on the antediluvians in Noah's day. He passed judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. He passed judgment on Egypt and Pharaoh then drowned the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. Jesus passed judgment on Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day. He also passed judgment on Israel just before His death. (Matthew 23) Jesus manages the kingdoms of Earth with the full cup principle, but He began passing eternal judgment on individuals in 1844.

Remember the mysterious words written on the wall at Belshazzar's feast? Daniel told the Babylonian king, **“. . . You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.”** (Daniel 5:27) God weighs the actions of nations as well as individuals. Jesus weighs our actions against our knowledge. **“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it, sins. . . . If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of**

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**judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.”** (James 4:17; Hebrews 10:26, 27)

The scales in the hand of the Holy Spirit indicate judgment has begun. We know from the doctrine of parallel temples and information in Daniel, that this judgment is not a judgment on nations, but on people. (See Daniel 7:9, 10; 8:14; Hebrews 8 and 9) Perhaps in this judgement process, Jesus began with Abel, the first man to die. For the past 160 years, Jesus has been reviewing and passing judgment on each person who has died. Of course, Jesus does not need 160 years to judge the records of the dead, but the angels and the 24 elders need this time. The ongoing judgment scene in Heaven is for their benefit. In effect, the angels have been getting a “college education” on the dimensions of God’s government. They are observing and learning about God’s constitution, branches of government, grace, wisdom, mercy, and most of all, how God’s love is the perfect balance between mercy and justice. Their lectures include realtime applications of God’s justice and mercy. Every life record presented to Jesus is a unique story. They are watching the close scrutiny which Jesus applies to every record. They have never seen anything like this, and the Father predetermined long ago that all of Heaven would benefit from observing this courtroom-classroom drama. This is why the Bible states, “thrones were arranged and the Ancient of Days took His seat . . . and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. . . .” As billions of heavenly beings silently observe, Jesus decides who shall be saved and who must be destroyed. Because the angels understand the incalculable value of eternal life, they watch with the greatest interest. They also watch closely for another reason. People who are granted eternal life will become their rulers. The redeemed from Earth will be elevated above the angels! (Revelation 1:6) Therefore, the angels are very curious to see who will rule over them. This is why they have to attend this convocation. Once they understand the full dimensions of God’s government and salvation, they know they have nothing to fear from the exaltation of victorious sinners from Earth. Each judicial case reveals a unique expression of God’s justice and mercy.

### **Will Work for Food**

The commission given to the Holy Spirit at the breaking of the third seal consists of a campaign to educate the world that Jesus began to cleanse Heaven’s temple in 1844. As the Holy Spirit prepared to leave the throne room, Jesus spoke these words, **“A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!”** Wages! These words are a promise of



wages. Wages, in the form of “good” food, is promised to those who will enter God’s service to promote this special message, and I can testify that after 17 years of endeavor, the Lord’s promise has proven faithful and true.

Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy encourages us to look for parallel passages in the Bible to determine the intended meaning of apocalyptic prophecy, and there is a very good parallel in the Old Testament concerning the use of wheat, barley, oil and wine as wages! King Solomon offered Hiram, king of Tyre, an enormous quantity of food if his servants would gather up materials for the construction of the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem. **“I will give your servants, the woodsmen who cut the timber, twenty thousand cors of ground *wheat* [125,000 bushels], twenty thousand cors of *barley* [125,000 bushels], twenty thousand baths of *wine* [115,000 gallons] and twenty thousand baths of olive *oil* [115,000 gallons].”** (2 Chronicles 2:10, italics and insertions mine) Solomon offered Hiram food because food was of greater value than silver or gold. The building of the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem would be an enormous undertaking for which Solomon did not have the building materials, but he did have food. He was willing to pay Hiram’s workmen with something more desirable than gold if they would do his bidding. At various times in human history, food has been the currency of choice between nations.

The parallel is that since 1844, Jesus has been offering wages to those who are willing to build up the knowledge of His heavenly temple. The Bible is a very comprehensive book and God’s ways are vast. Teaching the Word of God, if done well, is not a simple or easy task. Again, I can testify from personal experience, that this is the most difficult assignment I have ever had. An offer of wages goes with the breaking of the third seal because Jesus wants the world to know that He is judging the dead and the judgment of the living is coming soon. Jesus wants the news spread far and wide and He is willing to pay wages “in food” to anyone willing to carry the news!

#### **William Miller (1782-1849)**

An interesting sequence of events occurred in the United States just before the third seal was broken. The story began on a Sunday morning in 1816, when the Holy Spirit changed the heart of William Miller. Captain Miller was a 34 year old army officer who had settled in Low Hampton, New York, after retiring from military service. At the time, Miller was a self-proclaimed deist. (Deists believe in a Supreme Being, but they deny the inspiration of the Bible and hold to a view of God that



is contrary to the Bible.) However, Miller had two uncles that were Baptist preachers, and even though he was not a church member, he dutifully attended services at the Hampton Baptist Church with his believing wife whenever his uncle, Elisha, was preaching.

Because Miller did not attend church when his uncle was absent, certain members of the church thought Captain Miller might be persuaded to attend church more regularly if he were asked to participate. So, they asked him to read a selected sermon from *Proudfit's Practical Sermons* the next time his itinerant uncle was absent. To their surprise, Miller agreed. A few weeks later, Miller was called on to read the sermon one Sunday morning. About halfway through the sermon on Isaiah 53, Miller was overcome with a personal realization of what he was saying. Isaiah's predictions about the sufferings of Christ for our sins caused Miller to stop and begin weeping. He buried his face in his hands and humbly sat down. Many in the audience wept, too. The moving of the Spirit was overpowering that wonderful morning and, from that day forward, William Miller was a changed man. He became a born again believer in Christ and joined the Baptist Church. After his conversion that morning, Miller began to intensely study the Bible. Two years later, in 1818, Miller concluded from the book of Daniel that Jesus would return to Earth "around 1843." For several years, Miller kept this matter to himself for he thought he was alone in this view.<sup>1</sup>

Fifteen years after becoming a born again Christian, Miller began to feel a burden to publicly share his discoveries in the Bible. An invitation from his nephew to speak to a small church group initiated Miller's "lay ministry" in August 1831. Because Miller's views on the Second Coming were unusual, word spread. Miller gained the respect of those who heard him even though he was not highly educated. Miller was a very

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<sup>1</sup> Miller did not know in 1818 that several other Bible students in the United States and Europe had reached similar conclusions. For example, five years earlier, William Cunningham (1776-1849) of Lainshaw, Ayrshire (Scotland) concluded the world would end around 1843. William C. Davis (1760-1831), a Presbyterian minister in South Carolina came to an 1843 conclusion in 1818. In 1820, Archibald Mason (1753-1831), of Wishawton, Scotland, concluded the world would end "around 1844." It is not coincidental that more than twenty-five writers in Europe and the United States, having no collaboration with William Miller, came to the conclusion that the 2,300 days mentioned in Daniel 8:14 would terminate around 1844. (See *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, by LeRoy Edwin Froom, Volume III, pages 744,745, published 1946 by The Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington D.C.)

bright person, a keen thinker, well organized in his thoughts, thorough in his research and most of all, humble. In 1833, he was licensed by a small group of Baptist ministers so that he could preach in surrounding Baptist churches. By 1844, Miller estimated that he had personally delivered 4,500 lectures on Bible prophecy to 500,000 people; a remarkable feat when you consider that he was about 50 years old when he began preaching, the physical demands of travel in those days, and that he spoke to audiences without the support of a public address system. William Miller has few peers in early American history. He was the “Billy Graham” of his day. Of course, as his popularity grew, so did resistance. At the height of his ministry, historians calculate the Millerites (as his followers were called) numbered between fifty and one hundred thousand people. When Jesus did not appear in 1843 or 1844 as predicted, Miller’s credibility was ruined and he went to his grave five years later bearing the shame and stigma of a “false prophet.”

Shortly after the 1844 disappointment, Miller responded to his critics saying, “I have never courted the smiles of the proud, nor quailed when the world frowned. I shall not now purchase their favor; nor shall I go beyond duty to tempt their hate. I shall never seek my life at their hands; nor shrink I hope, from losing it, if God in his good providence so orders.” (*The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, by LeRoy Edwin Froom, Volume IV, page 683) William Miller died in 1849, broken in health and finances. He had “bet the farm” on the Second Coming of Jesus and spent everything he owned sharing the good news of Christ’s return. He died trusting in Jesus as his Savior, but he was unable to understand where he had gone wrong.

### **Miller Becomes Interdenominational**

In the early nineteenth century, New England Baptist churches were loosely organized and rather independent of each other. There were no telephones or televisions. This isolation explains how ministers in some areas could accept Miller’s views without causing a problem for the Baptist denomination in general. Because Miller was a layman and his early efforts were confined to a small geographical area, opposition to Miller’s ministry was not significant in the beginning. In addition to this, Protestants in New England were quite open to new ideas from the Bible. There was deep respect and interest in the Bible in those days. (Remember, the Declaration of Independence was only 55 years old when Miller began to preach.)

Miller’s obscure lay ministry was transformed into a public phenomenon by an event that occurred on November 13, 1833. That particular night,

New England experienced the most remarkable meteoric shower that had ever been witnessed. Tens of thousands of falling stars were seen in New England and portions of Europe.<sup>1</sup> It looked as though the whole sky was falling! New Englanders panicked and many thought the world was coming to an end. This spectacular event catapulted interest in Miller's message to a much larger stage and Miller's 17 years of study had prepared him to explain his understanding of the sixth seal to wondering people. When it became evident that Miller was unusually qualified and informed on prophetic matters, a group of about 40 ministers (half of whom were Baptists) recognized Miller's unique ministry in 1835 by granting him a license to speak in their affiliated churches. The falling of the stars overcame denominational barriers so that non-Baptists could hear what a self-taught Baptist preacher had to say.

### Miller's Logic

Because Miller believed that Daniel 8:14 pointed to the Second Coming in 1843, Miller naturally interpreted the falling of the stars to be a prophetic sign that Jesus would appear in about ten years. He had no doubt that the falling stars were a fulfillment of Revelation 6:13. Consider his logic: The sixth seal defines a sequence of events that climax with the appearing of Jesus in the clouds of Heaven. These events include a great earthquake, the darkening of the sun, the falling of the stars and the appearing of Jesus – in this order. (Revelation 6:12-14) Appealing to recent history, Miller reminded his listeners of the Lisbon, Portugal earthquake on November 1, 1755 where 60,000 people perished. This, he claimed, fulfilled the great earthquake in Revelation 6:12. Some people remembered "the dark day" of May 19, 1780. By noon on that day, the sun became so dark in New England that a person could not see a white sheet of paper in front of his face. Later that day, the moon became the color of blood. The animals even came in from the field around noon because the darkness was so great. (There is historical evidence that suggests the darkness was caused by a massive volcano

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<sup>1</sup> No one knew it at the time, but the dazzling meteoric shower that night was predictable. Earth annually passes through a debris field in space created by the orbiting comet, Tempel-Tuttle around mid-November. As a result, we regularly see meteoric showers of "falling stars" appearing to come from the constellation of Leo about mid-November. Hence, these "falling stars" are called Leonids. We now know that Earth passes through the densest part of the comet's debris field every thirty-three years. Sometimes, the thirty-third year produces a spectacular display of shooting stars as it did in 1833. The debris field of Tempel-Tuttle and the thirty-three year cycles of "shooting stars" was discovered thirty years later in 1863 by Yale College professor, Hubert Newton.

eruption in Mexico.) So, the great earthquake (1755), the dark day (1790), and the falling of the stars (1833) during the past 78 years proved to Miller that the sixth seal had been broken. According to Miller, the coming of Jesus had to be the next event because Revelation 6:14 (the next verse that follows the falling of the stars) describes the appearing of Jesus in clouds of glory. When Miller demonstrated how the 2,300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8:14 terminated in 1843, what could people say? Many sincere Protestants embraced Miller's message. Several influential pastors joined Miller and a Millerite movement formed. As Miller's teachings grew in popularity, mainstream Protestant churches circled the wagons by expelling people from their churches for "denying the faith once delivered to the saints."

When the Spring of 1843 passed and Jesus did not appear, the Millerites poured over their calculations and found a simple mistake. They had overlooked one year between 457 B.C. and 1843. Because calendar years are not counted on a mathematical scale, the transition from B.C. dating to A.D. dating requires adding an extra year because there is no zero year. So, the 1843 date was corrected to 1844 and 1844 became the terminus of the 2,300 years of Daniel 8:14. This discovery renewed the hopes of the Millerites and, more importantly, gave it one more year to spread the doctrine of an imminent Second Coming. However, the Spring and Fall of 1844 came and went without a Second Coming. Jesus did not appear and the Millerite movement imploded in bitter disappointment. The Millerite fiasco caused many Protestant churches, particularly Baptists, to disdain the study and meaning of prophecy.

### **Fifth Essential Doctrine Rediscovered**

After the Millerite movement collapsed, most of the Millerites renounced their faith or sheepishly returned to their churches. A few Millerites, however, did not give up. They returned to their Bibles to try to figure out what went wrong and soon discovered the problem. Miller had interpreted the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 to mean Earth would be purified of wicked people at the Second Coming. After carefully comparing the books of Hebrews, Leviticus and Daniel, they concluded that Miller's view on the 2,300 years was correct, but the sanctuary to be cleansed was the *true temple which is in Heaven*. (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 8 and 9) In other words, Jesus began cleansing Heaven's temple in 1844.

From my point of view today, Miller's ministry and disappointment served two purposes. First, Miller brought attention to Daniel 8:14 as no one else had. Second, the essential doctrine of God's use of parallel temples was rediscovered as a result of Miller's disappointment. The Holy Spirit accomplished an astounding success. After the Millerite

implosion passed, there were people on Earth who understood that the judgment bar of Christ in Heaven's temple had begun! Naturally, mainstream Protestantism was rather pleased that the Millerite movement had disappeared, but out of the ashes of Miller's disappointment, a new church group formed that would become known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This church group organized about twenty years after the disappointment (1863) – the same year Hubert Newton figured out the thirty-three year cycle of the shooting stars.

The story of William Miller and the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist church are germane to the breaking of the third seal. The Holy Spirit raised a humble Baptist preacher to draw attention to the commencement of the judgment bar of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; Daniel 8:14) just like He used a Catholic monk to draw attention to justification through faith. (Romans 1:17) As a denomination, Baptists rejected Miller's prophetic views before his ministry imploded in 1844. Because traditional Baptists could not accept the doctrines of God's use of parallel temples, God's seventh day Sabbath, and soul sleep, the Holy Spirit raised a new church to proclaim these essential Bible truths.

The wonderful thing about religious liberty in the United States is that people are free to study the Bible and believe whatever they wish to believe! This freedom enabled Miller to proclaim a truth whose time had come. Miller discovered the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 ended in the Spring of 1844 and my studies affirm the validity of his claim. I am also convinced that the Holy Spirit raised the Seventh-day Adventist Church to compile Luther's rediscovery of salvation through faith in Jesus, the Congregationalist view of soul sleep, the Seventh Day Baptist view on the observance of God's seventh day Sabbath, Miller's views on the Second Coming, and the subsequent rediscovery of God's use of parallel temples. Adventists merged these five doctrines into a harmonious system of understanding, but Seventh-day Adventists, like all churches, have not been willing to follow advancing light. This is a true paradox. Churches can form around a truth whose time has come, but they seem incapable of moving beyond that point when additional truth unfolds later. In this sense, Seventh-day Adventists have followed in the footsteps of Protestant churches which have not been able to move forward with advancing light. People will understand the darkness which currently holds Catholics and Protestants prisoners (their traditional prophetic views) when the next seal is broken!

### **Summary**

Four key points need to be emphasized as we conclude this section on the

breaking of the third seal. First, a person cannot reach the intended meaning of apocalyptic prophecy without some understanding of the five essential Bible doctrines. This is because the doctrine of soul sleep addresses the two resurrections and the destruction of the wicked at the end of the thousand years. (Revelation 20) Second, the doctrine of parallel temples explains the need to cleanse Heaven's temple. (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 8 and 9; Daniel 8:14) Third, the doctrine of the Ten Commandments, including the observance of God's seventh day Sabbath, explains the coming persecution of the saints, because a great controversy will occur over worshiping God after His judgments begin to fall. (Revelation 8 and 13) Last, the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus, rather than through "the church," explains why Jesus is going to tear down the religious systems of the world during the Great Tribulation so that religious paradigms will not obstruct His offer of salvation! (Revelation 17)

History reveals that the advancement of truth comes at a high price, and a majority of people are unwilling to pay the price. It is much more comfortable to remain within the social and religious comforts of fellowship than to follow the Spirit into the desert of rejection where often, you are alone with God. The Bible represents people as sheep for good reason. They prefer to flock together. They also tend to follow their leaders (political and religious) without thinking or thoroughly studying matters for themselves. Consider the total sum of religious thought that Hindus, Moslems, Catholics, Jews, Protestants, atheists and pagans believe today. All of these different ideas about God came from spiritual leaders who are as blind as the lay people they guide. (Matthew 23:16)

Humanity's diversity in religious beliefs proves that people are capable of believing anything and everything. Our diversity also proves that our belief systems have nothing to do with eternal truth. Even though Catholics and Protestants insist their views come directly from Scripture, a cursory review of Scripture can demonstrate otherwise. Truth is not determined by a majority vote or acceptance. Thoughtfully consider these words: "Truth is not what I believe. Truth is not even what I know. Truth is fact. I may not believe it. I may not know it. That does not change it. It is there nevertheless, waiting to be discovered and believed. Truth does not depend on the unsettled and changing opinions of men. It was truth before it was believed. It remains truth whether it is believed or not. Reason does not originate or create it. It merely discovers it. Consequently, reason is not a source. Truth goes back beyond reason. Others would have us believe that the church is the source of authority, particularly in matters of theology. They are wrong.



The church is the product of truth. It does not originate it. It came into being by accepting divine revelation. It is not the source of that revelation. Truth goes beyond the church, it is antecedent to it.”  
(*When a Man Dies*, Carlyle B. Haynes (1882-1958); p.5)

The breaking of the third seal occurred about 1844 and with it, the five essential teachings of Jesus have been rediscovered. These five doctrines have been understood for more than 160 years. Recall, for a moment, how the first three seals fit together. The doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus is the first essential doctrine. It came first and caused Protestants to separate theologically from Catholicism. After the Catholic Church’s power over Europe was broken in 1798, the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus was spread all over the world by Protestant missionaries. The breaking of the second seal brought on a campaign to translate and distribute the Bible, because Jesus requires discipleship from every soul who receives His salvation. (John 15:14; Hebrews 5:9) The widespread distribution of the Bible afforded ordinary people the privilege of discovering the teachings of Jesus, and various Protestants accepted and practiced three essential truths during the first part of the nineteenth century – salvation through faith in Jesus, soul sleep, and observing the Ten Commandments. The breaking of the third seal brought on a campaign to inform the world that Jesus had begun to cleanse Heaven’s temple, and the doctrine of the Second Coming became better understood. William Miller and later, Seventh-day Adventists, became players in this development. The end result is that today, right now in fact, a great stage for an upcoming drama has been set. The five essential teachings of Jesus are known and the book of Daniel has been unsealed. Now that we have the four rules of apocalyptic interpretation and the five essential teachings of Jesus, *we have the tools necessary to unlock the intended meaning of Daniel and Revelation*. This is highly important because the fourth seal will be broken next!

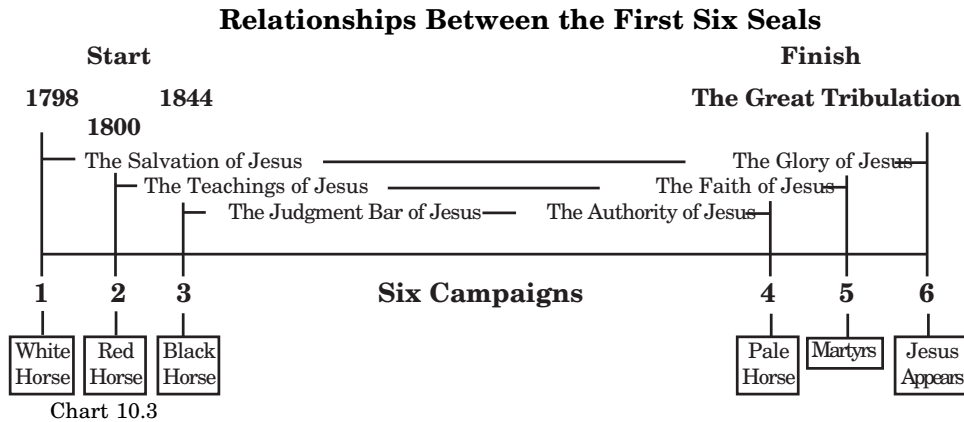
Before I close this section on the third seal, I must point out an interesting parallel. The first thing Jesus did after He began His public ministry on Earth was to cleanse the temple in Jerusalem. **“To those who sold doves He said, ‘Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!’ . . . Then the Jews demanded of him, ‘What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ The Jews replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ ”** (John 2:16-19) It is interesting to discover that Jesus cleansed the earthly temple after forty-six



years of construction, and it took forty-six years from the time that Jesus began breaking the seals in 1798 to begin cleansing Heaven's temple in 1844.

### Three Campaigns Underway

Now that we have examined the first three seals, consider for a moment how the first three seals relate to the next three seals. Look at Chart 10.3 and notice that when the first seal was broken, the Holy Spirit started a campaign in 1798 that will climax at the breaking of the sixth seal (the Second Coming). When the second seal was broken, the Holy Spirit started a campaign around 1800 that will climax after the breaking of the fifth seal (the martyrdom of many saints because of the Word of God). When the third seal was broken, the Holy Spirit started a process in 1844 (the judgment of the dead) that will climax after the fourth seal is broken (the judgment of the living). Notice how the first three seals start campaigns that relate to the next three seals during the Great Tribulation!



### Seal #4 - Pale Horse – Coming Next – The Authority of Jesus Revealed

**“When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the Earth.” (Revelation 6:7, 8)**

According to Rule One of apocalyptic prophecy, the breaking of the fourth seal has to occur after the breaking of the third seal in 1844. For reasons that will be presented in our study on the 144,000, the breaking

of the fourth seal has been “on hold” since 1994. This means the commencement of the Great Tribulation could begin any day. When Jesus breaks the fourth seal, the Holy Spirit will depart Heaven’s temple on a campaign of death and destruction. The face of the fourth living creature is that of an eagle. (Revelation 4:7) This face represents swift and deadly destruction. Notice how parallel language was used in Jeremiah’s day: **“This is what the Lord says: ‘Look! An eagle is swooping down [for destruction], spreading its wings over Moab.’”** (Jeremiah 48:40, insertion mine)

The mission of the Holy Spirit is personified with the name of “Death” in this text. The grave (Greek: *hades*) follows “close behind” because a fourth of Earth’s population will die. There will be death on a global scale not experienced since the flood. The final generation is about to see a display of the sovereign authority of Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit implements His command. The breaking of the fourth seal marks the sudden and irreversible start of the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 8:2-5; Matthew 24:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; Revelation 7:1-3)

### **The Holy Spirit – Agent of Wrath?**

It may seem contradictory at first that the Holy Spirit should be an agent of death and destruction since He is called “The Comforter” in the KJV or the “The Counselor” in the NIV. The problem with this definition is that it provides a limited view of the attributes of God. The Holy Spirit is mentioned in the first and last chapters of the Bible as a separate and distinct member of the Godhead. (Genesis 1:2; Revelation 22:17) The Holy Spirit is God. (Matthew 28:19, 20) He has the same powers and prerogatives as the Father and Son. (John 16) He is called various names in the Bible such as “The Spirit of Truth” (John 14:17), “The Spirit of Grace” (Hebrews 10:29), “The Spirit of the Lord” (Ezekiel 11:5), and “The Spirit of God” (Romans 15:19). At times, the Holy Spirit has enabled men to do incredible things. For example, Samson’s great strength came through the power of the Holy Spirit. **“The Spirit of the Lord came upon him [Samson] in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. . . .”** (Judges 14:6) **“Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him [Samson] in power. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of their belongings and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. . . .”** (Judges 14:19)

Shortly after Jesus ascended to Heaven, the Holy Spirit killed a husband and wife in Jerusalem for lying. This single event imposed a great deal of respect for the Holy Spirit among early Christians. The death of Ananias and his wife was similar to that of Uzzah when he irreverently

touched the Ark of the Covenant and was struck dead. (2 Samuel 6:7) Remember, the presence of the Holy Spirit was prevalent in the early church, and the killing of Ananias and Sapphira elevated respect for honesty and integrity in a dramatic way. Carefully review the story: **“Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet. Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Did not it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, was not the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God [the Holy Spirit].’ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, ‘Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?’ ‘Yes,” she said, ‘that is the price.’ Peter said to her, ‘How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.’ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.”** (Acts 5:1-11, insertion mine)

### **A Great Awakening**

When the fourth seal is broken, a powerful campaign will begin to reveal Jesus Christ to the world. God’s awesome wrath will stun Christians and non-Christians alike. Christians will be overwhelmed because today’s concept of “Jesus” is grossly unlike the real Jesus. His destructive judgments will shatter the false perceptions about Jesus which Catholics and Protestants have created. Non-Christians will also be awestruck when they witness the wrath of Jesus because there is no God that can stop His power and authority! It is interesting to notice how Jesus’ wrath will rip up the Earth and tear down billions of false paradigms at the same time. *The net effect of God’s wrath is that the world will be forced for a short time to hear the testimony of Jesus.*

Jesus is waiting for the appointed hour to arrive. Jesus has given the people of Earth every grace and opportunity, but the gospel of Jesus is no

longer going forward. The population of Earth is multiplying faster than the gospel can be told. Moral degeneracy is rampant. Religious bias is impenetrable. Violence is everywhere. When Jesus breaks the fourth seal, He signals the end of His patience with Earth's rejection of righteousness and truth. Earth's corporate cup of iniquity has overflowed. The wrath of Jesus will last 1,335 days and come in two waves. The seven first plagues will be accompanied with the offer of salvation through faith in Jesus, but the seven last plagues will not contain mercy. God's wrath will accomplish a number of things that His love and patience have not achieved. The ears of the survivors will be unplugged so they can hear the truth about Jesus. The eyes of the survivors will be opened because the blinders of religion will be removed. The clearest and brightest presentation of truth ever told will commence. The 144,000 will speak with unvarnished clarity. Jesus has carefully and deliberately designed the course of events during the Great Tribulation so that as many people as possible can be saved. (2 Peter 3:9) Given these facts, we can only begin to appreciate the depth of man's arrogance and ignorance when we see the level of wrath Jesus must use to get the attention and respect of the human race.

The breaking of the fourth seal marks the beginning of the time of wrath. **"He [Gabriel] said: 'I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end.'"** (Daniel 8:19, insertion and italics mine) The appointed time of the end is called "a time of wrath" because everyone on Earth will suffer wrath. People who obey God will feel the wrath of their government and people who obey their government will feel the wrath of God. Every nation will reel from the execution of God's four deadly judgments – sword, famine, plague and wild beasts. The destruction of the fourth seal is described in Revelation 8 as the first four trumpets. Twenty-five percent of Earth's population will perish over the course of a few weeks. Currently, this means more than 1.5 billion people are about to perish because of God's wrath, and the religious systems of the world say nothing about the opening of the fourth seal. Why is this? The answer is arrogance and ignorance.

### Three Types of Wrath

Pre-tribulation advocates have been led to believe that God's children will escape His coming wrath. They typically put 1 Thessalonians 5:9 and Romans 5:9 together to support their claim. Unfortunately, these texts do not apply to the Great Tribulation. (I wish they did.) Instead, they speak of God's wrath as the penalty for sin, that is, the second death – not the wrath of the Great Tribulation. There are three types of

wrath, and understanding the nature and purpose of these different types is crucial to understanding the fourth seal:

1. **Wrath as the fruit or consequences that comes from wrong doing:** If we violate a physical or moral law, we suffer wrath – the consequences of the law. Paul wrote, **“Because [the] law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.”** (Romans 4:15, insertion mine) For example, if we eat too much at Thanksgiving, we will suffer pain (wrath) for overeating. If we commit adultery, we will eventually suffer wrath (the social consequences) for our sin and the innocent around us (spouse, children, families) will suffer too. The Bible says, **“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”** (Galatians 6:7, 8) Sin always causes sorrow, suffering, pain and death because these things are the consequences of wrong doing.

A victim of wrong doing seeks justice (revenge). Once revenge has been administered, wrath is satisfied. The Middle East is a painful demonstration of a revenge process that cannot achieve justice. This is why Jesus taught, **“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . . . And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”** (Matthew 5:44; 6:12) Jesus said these words because the power of forgiveness is God’s way to peace. The power of forgiveness comes to those who are willing to receive it from God. Forgiveness terminates wrath. This is why Paul wrote, **“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”** (Romans 12:19)

Of course, Jesus ordained the establishment of government when He created man. He permits humanity to execute corporate justice on wrong doers. (Romans 13) Jesus also empowers governments to administer justice as long as they uphold righteous principles. (Numbers 35) When governments overstep their authority, Jesus brings them down. (Daniel 4:17, 35) Babylon, Medo-Persia, Grecia, Rome and many other governments fell because they degenerated into arbitrary rule (lawlessness). Sin has consequences which are called wrath.

2. **Wrath as the penalty for sin:** When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, they were put under the obligation of law. **“But**

**of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”** (Genesis 2:17, KJV) Adam and Eve were to be executed the very day they ate the fruit, because the penalty for sin is *death by execution*. This point was proved every time a sacrificial lamb died in the Old Testament. The animal was slaughtered on an altar – it did not naturally die from a disease. Even more, Jesus was executed for our sins (1 Thessalonians 2:14, 15) because the penalty for sin is death by execution. This point will be demonstrated when the wicked die at the end of the thousand years. No wicked person has received the penalty for his sins yet. Billions of wicked and righteous people have died from the *consequences* of sin, but God has not executed one wicked person with the penalty required for sin! The execution of the wicked occurs at the end of the thousand years. Think about this, if God had executed a wicked person, how could an eternally condemned person be resurrected “to life” (Revelation 20:5, 6) at the end of the thousand years only to perish in the fires of Hell again? (Revelation 20:14, 15) The doctrine of soul sleep is highly important because it clarifies this aspect of God’s wrath so clearly.

Everyone who commits the unpardonable sin will be declared “wicked” by Jesus during the judgment bar of Christ because they rejected the demands of the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus will declare people who submit to the Holy Spirit “righteous” because His blood covers everyone who submits to the authority of the Holy Spirit. This is the meaning and context of Paul’s words, **“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath [as in the penalty for sin] but to receive salvation through [the blood of] our Lord Jesus Christ.”** (1 Thessalonians 5:9, insertions mine) **“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”** (Romans 5:9) **“For the wages of sin is [eternal] death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Romans 6:23, insertion mine) **“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment [of mankind] will be revealed.”** (Romans 2:5, insertion mine) Sin not only has consequences, but it has a deadly penalty, too. The penalty for sin is eternal death by execution. (Note: The difference between the consequences of sin and the penalty for sin may be compared to the difference between compensatory and punitive judgments in a court system.)

**3. Wrath comes in the form of redemptive or destructive**

**judgments:** If a nation angers God by persistent rebellion, He brings wrath against that nation by sending *redemptive* judgments. If that nation continues in rebellion, God brings more wrath by sending *destructive* judgments. Jesus told Israel, **“But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it.”** (Leviticus 26:14-16) After centuries of trying to get Israel to accomplish the purposes for which He delivered them out of Egypt, Jesus sent Israel into Babylonian captivity in 605 B.C. The first siege of Jerusalem and the captivity of Israel’s finest young men did not change Israel’s behavior. So, Jesus sent Nebuchadnezzar a second time in 598 B.C. Still no change of heart. Finally, Jesus told Ezekiel: **“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments – sword and famine and wild beasts and plague – to kill its men and their animals! Yet there will be some survivors – sons and daughters who will be brought out of it. They will come to you, and when you see their conduct and their actions, you will be consoled regarding the disaster I have brought upon Jerusalem – every disaster I have brought upon it.”** (Ezekiel 5; 14:21) Finally, King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and totally destroyed it. When redemptive judgments do not produce repentance and reformation, God’s wrath becomes grossly destructive. Global destruction occurred in Noah’s day for this reason. **“So the Lord said, ‘I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the Earth – men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air – for I am grieved that I have made them.’ ”** (Genesis 6:7) During the Great Tribulation, global destruction will happen again. First, there will be seven redemptive judgments (the seven trumpets), and then, there will be seven destructive judgments (the seven bowls). **“I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues – last, because with them God’s wrath is completed.”** (Revelation 15:1)



### Four Deadly Judgments

Near the beginning of Segment III in this chapter on the seven seals, we examined the breaking of the fourth seal because I wanted to demonstrate two things. First, throughout the Bible, *God's deadly judgments are defined as sword, famine, plague and wild beasts*. Second, the breaking of the fourth seal has to be in the future because the breaking of the fourth seal has to happen after the third seal was broken in 1844.

Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 32 and Ezekiel 14 leave no wiggle room on the meaning of “sword, famine, plague and wild beasts.” God’s wrath is executed on mankind through these four instruments. (See also Leviticus 26; Jeremiah 21:7, 42:17; Ezekiel 7:15.) **“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments – sword and famine and wild beasts and plague – to kill its men and their animals!”** (Ezekiel 14:21) Jesus sent the flood in Noah’s day. He kills people when sin becomes so pervasive that recovery is impossible. Jesus warned Moses that He would do the same to Israel if they rebelled against His covenant: **“See now that I myself am He! There is no God besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.”** (Deuteronomy 32:39)

The Bible indicates over and over that these four judgments are punitive in nature; that is, Jesus deliberately uses them to punish nations when wickedness exceeds the limits of divine patience. This is why the language of the fourth seal is so succinct. The Great Tribulation will begin with the breaking of the fourth seal. Judgments from God are upon us because we have exhausted the limits of divine forbearance. If only Catholics and Protestants understood the subject of God’s wrath. A correct understanding of this subject will change your thoughts. We are accountable to God for our words and actions. God has not changed! His Word has not changed. Our arrogance and ignorance keep us from understanding God’s wrath. This is why the world remains in great darkness and this is why the Holy Spirit will soon be sent out of Heaven’s courtroom on a campaign of wrath. Seeing is believing.

### Summary

Now that we have examined the four horsemen of Revelation 6, you should notice a very interesting progression. The first campaign was a message to the world of salvation through faith in Jesus. The second campaign focused on the translation and distribution of the Bible

throughout the world so that the teachings of Jesus could be rediscovered and understood. The third campaign was a message to the world that the judgment bar of Christ is under way. Jesus is cleansing Heaven's temple by reviewing the records of the dead. The fourth campaign will be a mission of wrath that will kill 25% of the world's population. This coming display of God's wrath will accomplish a very important task. Humanity's arrogance and ignorance will be subdued for a short time so that the world can hear His servants, the 144,000, present the following messages from Jesus:

1. The judgment of the living has begun. Honor the Creator. Worship the Creator on His seventh day Sabbath.
2. Do not worship God according to the laws of Babylon, the Crisis Government.
3. Do not worship or obey the Antichrist or receive his mark.
4. Come out of Babylon – avoid her plagues.

We will examine these messages in Revelation 14 later, but when the fourth seal is broken, the wrath of Jesus will begin, the judgment of the living will begin, the ministry of the 144,000 will begin, and the Great Tribulation will begin. In days to come, the teachings of Jesus will explain *why* the wrath of God is upon us. Everyone will be able to see Bible prophecy fulfilled before their very eyes. The fulfillment of prophecy will give the Bible an incredible amount of believability and authority! In fact, this credibility will eventually cause evil men to kill those who obey God's commandments. This killing is described in the next seal! (Remember how the distribution of the Bible under the second seal is connected to the killing that occurs during the fifth seal – see Chart 10.3.)

At this time, the stage is set. The people of Earth are about to be actors in a drama they do not anticipate. The five essential doctrines have gone as far as they can go. Bibles have been translated and distributed. The 144,000 will be empowered at the right moment and the wrath of Jesus will arrest the world. Earth's cup of iniquity is full. The only thing that is holding back the "four winds" of God's wrath is the sealing of the 144,000. (Revelation 7:1-4) During the Great Tribulation, the sheep in every religious system will hear the voice of Jesus speaking through His servants, and many of these sheep will call on the name of the Lord and be saved. The goats will rebel against the testimony given by the servants of Jesus and they will punish His saints for refusing to go along with their rebellion. Jesus has deliberately and carefully designed a

course of events so the Great Tribulation can accomplish several purposes. Through the testimony of the 144,000, Jesus will overcome the bias and hatred that exists toward Him, and a large number of people will be saved. Jesus will be revealed to the world as the only Savior of man. Jesus will be revealed as Almighty God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As these revelations occur, God's sheep will abandon their false gods and serve Him who saves to the utmost. Isn't this amazing?

In closing, I should point out that a correct understanding of the first four seals unlocks several key points in Revelation that we will soon study. For example, the breaking of the fourth seal initiates the Great Tribulation. The breaking of the fourth seal will be marked with a global earthquake. (Revelation 8:5) The 1,260 days of the Two Witnesses begin with the breaking of the fourth seal. (Revelation 11:3) The seven trumpets of Revelation 8 and 9 explain how sword, famine, plague and wild beasts occur during the Great Tribulation. The breaking of the fourth seal will produce a response from man which is described in Revelation. The horrific judgments of Jesus will cause a Crisis Government (the composite beast in Revelation 13:1) to rise and become a global power. As our examination of Revelation continues, these matters will become clearer.

Take a few moments to examine Chart 10.4 on the following page. Notice the timing of the first four seals. The length of time between seal four and seal six is a maximum of 1,335 days.

#### **Seal #5 – A Campaign of Martyrdom – The Faith of Jesus Demonstrated**

**“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the Earth and avenge our blood?’ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.”**  
**(Revelation 6:9-11)**

The fifth seal will be a somber campaign. These three verses are full of information that will be helpful and encouraging to God's people when the time comes. When God's people suffer martyrdom under the fifth seal because of their loyalty to God's Word, the *assurance of the white robe* will be worth more than all the fine gold found on Earth! I estimate

## Revelation 4-6 Expands The Matrix

## Today

Timing:	538 B.C.	331 B.C.	168 B.C.	A.D. 476	A.D. 538	1798	1844	Great Tribulation
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Rev 4-6						Jesus Found Worthy, Then Breaks First Three Seals Between 1798 - 1844		Seal 4 Marks The Beginning of the Great Tribulation	
						1   2   3		4	5   6
Daniel 8	---- 457 B.C. -----2,300 Day/Years ----- 1844 ----							The Time of the End	
	Ram with Two Horns	Goat With One Great Horn -- then Four Horns	-- 538 -1798 --			Pre- Advent Judgment of the Dead	Judgment of the Living	Horn Power from the North: Stern Faced King	
Daniel 7	Bear with Three Ribs	Leopard with Four Heads	Monster	10 Horns at First	1,260 Day/Years A.D. 538 to 1798		Books Opened	Little Horn Heard Boasting	Beasts are Burned Up in the Fire at the End
					Little Horn Rises Uproots 3 Horns	Cout Seated Little Horn Falls			
Daniel 2	Chest of	Thighs of	Legs of	Feet of					10 Toes 10 Kings
	Silver	Bronze	Iron	Iron and Clay					Iron/Clay
	Medo- Persia	Grecia	Rome	Many Kings					10 Kings

Chart 10.4

that the fifth seal campaign will begin about 1,040 days into the Great Tribulation. (This timing will be further discussed in the chapter on the Seven Trumpets.) This is about seven months before the offer of salvation is closed forever. Because the end of redemption is near, Jesus initiates a powerful campaign to demonstrate the religious difference between faith and presumption. (Few people experientially know the difference now.) Faith loves God's Word and humbly submits to God's demands. Presumption believes in God, but justifies rebellion against the commands of God. The behaviors of Cain and Abel reflect these powerful forces. Both men built altars to honor God. One man humbly obeyed the command of the Lord by bringing a lamb from his flock. The other man presumed God would accept his offering of fruit and the rest of the story is history. Presumption is offended by faith, and ultimately, presumption convinces itself that the destruction of the faithful is justifiable. This is why Revelation says, **"This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus."** (Revelation 14:12)

You may recall the breaking of the seven seals began with the doctrine that salvation comes *through faith* in Christ. Before the offer of salvation is closed, Jesus wants the distinction between faith and presumption sharply differentiated throughout the world, so no one will be confused about the properties of faith. Millions of God's children will choose death rather than obey the demands of the Antichrist. Like the three Hebrews in Daniel 3, the saints would rather perish in a fiery furnace than bow down and worship the image of the beast. (Revelation 13:15) The Bible predicts millions of people will die rather than disobey the commandments of God and renounce their faith in Christ. Innocent blood will demonstrate the great gulf between faith and presumption.

### **The Faith of Jesus Reflected**

The fifth seal is different from the other seals in that the faith of Jesus is revealed in this campaign through His saints. Consider this: The first four seals were "delivered" to Earth by four horsemen riding out of Heaven's temple, the sixth seal will be a campaign revealing Christ's glory, and the seventh seal will be a full disclosure of His deity. So, six of the seven seals are direct revelations from Jesus to the world, but the fifth seal will be an indirect, powerful revelation, showing the faith of Jesus through the death of His saints. The martyrdom of the fifth seal will separate the faithful from the faithless, and I have no doubt, that like the martyr Stephen, the faces of people who stand firm for Jesus will shine like the faces of angels! **"All who were sitting in the**

**Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was [bright] like the face of an angel.”** (Acts 6:15, insertion mine)

### **The Meaning of “Faith in Christ” Distorted**

Because “faith in Christ” has been transformed into “presumptions about Christ,” Jesus will set the record straight with the testimony of martyrs. Many pastors are teaching fables as truth, and many people have deceived themselves into thinking that God is pleased with their actions when the opposite is true. (See Isaiah 1-4 for a review of this ever persistent problem.) The fruit of religious presumption is decadence. The devil’s deceptions are clever. He is a master at gradualism. He induces intellectual games that lead to compromises because he knows that sin has consequences. For example, Americans have been wrestling with the abortion issue for thirty-five years and the United States is just as divided today on the subject as when the controversy started. The funny thing about this controversy is that hardly anyone is addressing the sinful, immoral behavior that produces unwanted babies. Why is there so much silence about sexual promiscuity? The devil knows that once an immoral couple conceives, tough choices are ahead. Something has to be done with the fruit of promiscuity. So, the controversy moves away from the cause of the problem to dealing with the consequences of sinful behavior, and *there are no human solutions to the problem of sin!*

Biblical faith means a complete surrender to God’s will – to go, to be, and to do all that He asks *at any cost*. This is the faith that Jesus lived by (Luke 22:42; Hebrews 5:7) and during the Great Tribulation this faith will cost many saints their lives. There is no wiggle room on this. The saints will be bitterly persecuted for forty-two months. (Revelation 13:5) The Bible clearly predicts this persecution, but millions of people have presumptively chosen to believe in a pre-tribulation rapture, expecting to avoid suffering and martyrdom.

An intellectual assent to truth cannot withstand the purifying fires of persecution. Jesus willingly went to His death because of the faith He exercised in His Father each day. When Jesus arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane, He asked the Father to remove the cup of martyrdom from His lips, but it was the will of the Father that Jesus die. (John 3:16) Similarly, many martyrs will submit to death because it is the will of Jesus that they do so. Jesus has put the saints on notice of this coming extremity saying, **“If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.”** (Revelation 13:10)





darkness caused, perhaps, by hundreds of volcano eruptions.) Twenty-five percent of Earth will perish during the first four trumpets. The fifth trumpet marks the appearing of the devil masquerading as Almighty God, and after five months of tormenting wicked people who are not willing to worship him, the sixth trumpet sounds. When the sixth trumpet sounds, the devil's forces will be allowed to kill one-third of the world's population so that he can establish total dominion over Earth. (Revelation 9:15) Notice on the chart how the fifth seal is broken immediately after the sixth trumpet sounds. When the slaughter of the fifth seal is finished, Earth's population will be reduced to about 50% of what it was before the Great Tribulation began.

### **The Identity of the Altar**

**“. . . I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God and the testimony they had maintained.”** When the fifth seal was broken, John saw the souls of martyrs located under an altar. This language speaks volumes if you already understand the prerequisite doctrine of parallel temples. The altar mentioned in the fifth seal refers to the bronze Altar of Burnt Offering. You may recall, this altar was located in the courtyard of the temple (Exodus 40:6), while the golden Altar of Incense was located inside the tabernacle, near the veil. (Exodus 40:5; Leviticus 16:12) Since the golden Altar of Incense is specifically mentioned in Revelation 8:3, this has led some people to assume the altar mentioned in the fifth seal is also the golden Altar of Incense. We can discover the true identity of this altar by comparing the heavenly altar with the altars used in the earthly temple. (Hebrews 8:1-5) Notice this text: **“Present your burnt offerings on the altar of the Lord your God, both the meat and the blood. The blood of your sacrifices must be poured beside the altar of the Lord your God, but you may eat the meat.”**

(Deuteronomy 12:27, See also Leviticus 5:9; 8:15.) This text indicates that the blood of animal sacrifices was poured into a container beneath the Altar of Burnt Offering in the earthly temple. Once this point is understood, the parallel becomes obvious.

The souls of the martyrs are under the Altar of Burnt Offering in Heaven. They are located in Heaven because they represent human beings *sacrificed* for the cause of Christ. The Bible says they were slain because of their faithfulness to the Word of God and the testimony they maintained. Remember the campaign to translate and distribute the Bible after the second seal was broken (the large sword, the sword of truth, placed in the rider's hand). Do you remember our study of the second seal about how the translation and distribution of the Bible

would cause men to kill one another? The breaking of the fifth seal will be the fulfilling of the second seal. The Bible says these souls under the altar were slain because of the Word of God. During the Great Tribulation, God will have a people who stand on the Bible and the Bible alone as the Word of God. A time is coming when all people who obey the Word of God (Abel the faithful) will be regarded as enemies of God (Cain the presumptuous). In the same way, the Crisis Government (Babylon) will regard the saints as enemies and later, Lucifer, who will be masquerading as Almighty God, will insist on their death. Jesus warned His disciples, **“All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.”** (John 16:1-4)

### Who Has Greater Guilt?

The fifth seal is a problem for people who believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. Advocates of a pre-tribulation rapture believe that they are worthy of escaping the suffering of the Great Tribulation, because they “believed in Christ” *before* the Great Tribulation began. This is foolish. James wrote, **“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.”** (James 2:19) Believing in God is one thing; obeying God at any cost is another. Currently, a large majority of the world rejects the authority of Christ, as well as His teachings, and Earth’s population is exploding faster than the gospel can travel. Billions of people on Earth have not had a chance to thoughtfully consider the gospel of Christ. They cannot consider it because they are immersed in the barriers of culture, language, religious arrogance, and ignorance. Should these ignorant people be punished for 42 months with suffering and martyrdom while the raptured saints are playing harps in Heaven? How can Jesus torment the heathen (meaning all of the “unsaved”) with a Great Tribulation, when proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel to the heathen is *the* responsibility of Christians? (Matthew 28:19, 20) Who has the greater guilt: The pagans who did not or could not hear the gospel because Christians did not come to their village, or Christians who chose a fine paying job instead of traveling to remote villages to share the gospel? The “great escape” (as some call the pre-tribulation rapture) is plausible when presumption has displaced faith in Christ. If Jesus, our Lord and Master, came to Earth to suffer and die for us, should His servants do less for Him? Jesus said,

**“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.” (John 15:20, 21)**

### **Saints as Sacrifices**

John was shown the souls of martyrs under the Altar of Burnt Offering in Heaven because they are sacrificial martyrs. Before I can address what this statement means, I have to explain a few items. First, the doctrine of soul sleep becomes highly important once again in our study on Revelation. The souls of all dead people are dead – awaiting either the first resurrection or the second. (John 6:39, 40; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Revelation 20:5) The souls of Abel, Stephen, Paul, and millions of other martyrs are not located under the Altar of Burnt Offering in Heaven now. Dead souls are not in Hell, either. Furthermore, the souls of those martyred during the fifth seal are not to be confused with people who have been martyred for the cause of Christ through the ages. The souls under the Altar represent people who will die for Jesus *after* the fifth seal is broken.

From time to time in Revelation, Jesus uses figurative language, and Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy addresses the use of figurative language saying, *“Apocalyptic language can be literal, symbolic or analogous. To reach the intended meaning of apocalyptic prophecy, the student must consider: (a) the context, (b) the use of parallel language elsewhere in the Bible, and (c) relevant statements in the Bible which define the symbol if an element is thought to be symbolic.”* Since Rule Three says we have to consider the use of parallel language, please consider the following text: **“Now Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let’s go out to the field.’ And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ ‘I do not know,’ he replied. ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ The Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.’ ”** (Genesis 4:8-10) Of course, the blood of Abel was not talking to God, but the presence of Abel’s innocent blood spoke volumes to God! God saw the blood of Abel on the ground and its presence cried out to God for justice. Therefore, the Lord punished Cain for the murder of his brother. (Genesis 4:11-16) This is the point of the fifth seal. First, the souls are under the altar. This means they were used as sacrifices for the cause of Christ. Second, the innocent blood of these martyrs cried out in a loud voice for relief and revenge saying, **“ ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy**

**and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the Earth and avenge our blood?’ [Then, the martyrs were told,] . . . to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.”**

(Revelation 6:10, 11) Jesus assures the martyrs that He is following a plan – the Plan of Salvation. He is deeply aware of each martyr’s situation, and He is counting the number of martyrs because there is a predetermined *number* of saints He will sacrifice before bringing martyrdom to an end. Jesus sacrifices a specific, large number of saints to demonstrate the great gulf between faith and presumption. The problem is that presumption looks like an identical twin to faith. At three feet, you cannot tell them apart, but the distinction becomes clear when life itself is threatened. Remember, salvation comes through faith, not through presumption.

### **The Setting**

To better appreciate the campaign of the fifth seal, consider the setting on Earth when martyrdom begins. Jesus will release the devil from the abyss (spirit world) during the fifth trumpet. After **the majority** of people on Earth have heard the gospel (the terms and conditions of salvation), but refuse to love the truth and be saved, the devil will be released. The devil will be released out of the spirit world, and he will physically appear on Earth because the world has rejected Christ’s authority. **“. . . They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”** (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12) If people refuse to worship Jesus and submit to His authority after the clearest evidences of His will have been presented, and when the urging of the Holy Spirit has been silenced by deliberate rebellion against God’s Word, Jesus can do little to save people. So, Jesus releases the Antichrist – Lucifer, “the destroyer” from the abyss. (Revelation 9:1) The physical presence of the devil changes everything for the wicked. Human beings will now choose to obey Jesus or they will be forced to obey Lucifer. No other options exist. Jesus allows the devil to physically appear on Earth to force undecided people into a decision. When the devil commands worship, the conflict between Christ and the Antichrist will narrow down to the same question that Elijah asked Israel on Mt. Carmel: **“. . . How long will you waver between two opinions?”** (1 Kings 18:21)

During the fifth trumpet, the devil and his angels will torment wicked people, but they cannot kill a single person. **“They were not given**

**power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.**" (Revelation 9:5, 6) For five months, the devil will intimidate and torture the wicked who refuse to submit to his sovereign authority, but he is not allowed to kill anyone. So, when the sixth trumpet sounds in Heaven's court, most of the people on Earth will have made their decision as to whom they will worship, but a few people will remain on the fence.

After the five months of torment are over, the fifth seal is broken and the martyrdom of the saints begins. When the sixth trumpet sounds, four powerful demons will be released on the earth. The devil's angels will begin a search and destroy mission, killing people who oppose Lucifer's claims. They will kill the non-religious wicked and righteous alike because both groups of people have refused to worship the devil who is masquerading as Almighty God. (Remember the discussion about three classes of people – the non-religious wicked, the religious wicked and the righteous in our study on Daniel 10-12.) **"And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number."** (Revelation 9:15,16) Because the Great Tribulation affects every family, this horrible slaughter will have destructive and redemptive value at the same time. When loved ones, separated by differences of opinion during the Great Tribulation, see the murderous slaughter of friends and family members who have lived godly lives, some of them will repent of their rebellion at the last minute and take their stand for Christ. The blood of martyrs will purchase many precious converts for Christ. This is why Jesus sacrifices one-third of His saints. He is willing to sacrifice millions of saints to save one soul. Jesus Himself was a sacrifice for us and He will use His faithful followers as sacrifices to save as many people as possible!

There are several profound points here. First, Jesus has predetermined the number of martyrs that will die. He knows when the last person will make his decision. Once the last decision is made, the martyrdom stops and the seventh trumpet sounds. **"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise [from His throne of intercession]. There will be a time of distress [wrath, as in seven bowls] such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name**

**is found written in the Book [of Life] – will be delivered [from martyrdom].”** (Daniel 12:1, insertion mine) Jesus will declare: **“Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.”** (Revelation 22:11)

The second point is even more profound. It is hard to comprehend the martyrdom of millions of saints for the benefit of a few people who will choose salvation at the last minute. In other words, if the *sacrifice* of 500,000,000 saints produces just a few converts to Christ during the last moments of grace, then the sacrifice is worth it to Jesus. This shows the value He places on each human being. When God’s children begin to understand that 500,000,000 martyrs are worth as few as ten converts to Jesus, then we faintly begin to realize what the Father gave the world when He gave us Jesus. The sacrifice of Jesus is of greater value than the sum total of the human race! But, **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”** (John 3:16, 17)

The third profound point concerns the destructive/redemptive outcome of the sixth trumpet. By killing one-third of the human race, the devil gains what he has wanted from the day that Adam and Eve sinned, namely, dominion over mankind. Jesus allows the devil to kill the non-religious opposition as well as many saints. The end result is that Earth will be divided into two distinct camps of people: people worshiping the Lamb and people worshiping the lamb-like beast. Even though it appears on Earth that “Almighty God” (Lucifer) is in control, Jesus controls and limits Lucifer’s operations because Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is in control of this drama and He has a few more lessons to demonstrate before bringing the drama to a close. The sacrifice of martyrs ends a 6,000 year old offer. When the last human being makes his choice, like the door on Noah’s ark, the offer of salvation from the penalty of sin closes.

### **Revenge**

The martyrs cried out in a loud voice, **‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the Earth and avenge our blood?’** The martyrdom of the saints will occur over a period of about seven months. (This timing will be discussed in the chapter about the Seven Trumpets.) During this seven month time period, the devil will set up his one world church (called the image and

the harlot), and he will require everyone to convert to this new religion or be killed. **“He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.”** (Revelation 13:15-17)

We will discuss the image and the mark of the beast at length in our study on Revelation 13. For now, consider the point that a third of the saints will perish when the fifth seal is broken because they will refuse to worship the image or receive the mark of the beast. The blood of these martyrs will cry out for justice, and the wicked will be brought to justice after the seventh trumpet sounds. **“The nations were angry; and your wrath [the seven bowls] has come. The time has come for judging [avenging] the dead [martyrs], and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great – and for destroying those who destroy the Earth.”** (Revelation 11:18, insertions mine) Notice how Jesus brings the wicked murderers to justice! He gives the bloodthirsty murderers blood to drink and the angels of Heaven declare the Lord righteous for extracting this horrible revenge! **“The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: ‘You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.’ And I heard the altar respond: ‘Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.’ ”** (Revelation 16:4-7)

### **The White Robe**

**“Then each of them [the martyrs] was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer . . .”** Believe it or not, an enormous amount of encouragement is in this passage. Let us consider the point in time when this occurs. When the fifth seal is broken, the saints have endured more than a thousand days of great tribulation. They will be weary, deathly ill, imprisoned for their loyalty and faith, or suffering from injuries resulting from torture and persecution. As the saints see the misery of the world and the ugly conflict between good and evil, many of them would rather die than to go forward for another year.



Because Jesus said, “My grace is sufficient for you,” the saints do not fear death. **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”** (Psalm 23:4) At that time, many of the saints will, like Job, be living on God’s grace and hanging on to life by the hour. The devil’s four angels will be allowed to murder those saints who Jesus has determined should be released from their body of suffering. **“If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed.”** The devil’s forces will appear to have achieved a great victory, but in reality, the death of these saints is God’s will! Jesus will accomplish two things through their sacrificial death. First, as stated already, the martyrdom of these saints will impress a few of the undecided to take their stand for Christ. Second, Jesus allows these faithful warriors to rest from their labors. The martyrs are assured of two things: First, they can say, **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”** (2 Timothy 4:7, 8) Second, they will be comforted knowing that they have been sealed with the seal of God, and they will eagerly await to receive the promised white robe. The martyrs will calmly go to their death standing firm on the Word of God and holding tightly to their faith in Jesus. They truly rest in peace awaiting the glorious resurrection that “lies just ahead.” **“‘Then I heard a voice from Heaven say, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.’”** (Revelation 14:13)

### Summary

Our examination of the fifth seal ends with the profound affirmation of a truth. Faith in Jesus means a complete surrender to go, to be, and to do all that Jesus asks *at any cost*. Following Jesus and living by faith is so contrary to our fallen nature. It is humanly impossible to love our enemies, but Jesus died for us while we were His enemies. (Romans 5:10) It is so hard to stand alone for what is right, but Jesus stood alone in Pilate’s judgment hall for us. (Matthew 27) It is so hard to be completely honest and true, but Jesus came from Heaven and withstood endless scorn to demonstrate the truth about God the Father. (John 17) It is so hard to be submissive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, but Jesus was tempted in all points as we are without sinning. (Hebrews 4:15) It is so hard to be different when the pressure to “go along” with the crowd is so great. (Matthew 7:13) Following Jesus and living by faith are the most

difficult experiences known to the human race. Why do you think ancient Israel failed? Why did the Catholic Church fail? Why has Protestantism failed? When the majority of people in any religious organization displaces faith with presumption, that religious system falls from grace and it becomes a prison of darkness. (Matthew 23:27)

The gospel of Jesus is not an intellectual assent to truth. The gospel of Jesus is a declaration of our true position and condition before God. The gospel of Jesus is an explanation of the terms and conditions for salvation. The gospel of Jesus is a clarion call to overcome sin through the power of Christ. Paul wrote, **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”** (Romans 1:16-17) The gospel of Jesus proclaims there is abundant grace to do the impossible if we are willing to submit to it! (2 Corinthians 12:9) In fact, there is strength enough, if and when the time comes, to go to our death for Christ if that is God’s will. (Revelation 13:10) Jesus has given us a perfect example of loving our enemies and living by faith.

By zooming forward in time to the fifth seal, we have been able to examine the difference between faith and presumption. The drama of martyrdom completes the story. The end result is that we are in an excellent position *right now* to understand the first seal. Now, we can see where faith in Jesus will take us. The fifth seal allows us to see “around the bend.” We can see why Jesus needs people who will put complete faith in Him so that He can use our life and death, as necessary, to accomplish the salvation of those around us! The fifth seal declares the meaning of biblical faith. The fifth seal unmasks the deception of presumption. People who live by faith are partakers of divine power! **“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”** (1 John 5:4, 5)

#### Seal #6 – A Campaign of Victory – The Glory of Jesus Exposed

**“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a**

**strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’ ”** (Revelation 6:12-17)

The sixth seal closes the campaigns of the first five seals in a show of power, brilliance and glory that would dwarf the simultaneous detonation of all the world’s atomic bombs. When Jesus appears, He will rescue the righteous and destroy the wicked. The false prophet (Lucifer) and his Crisis Government (the beast of Revelation 13:1) will be captured alive and thrown into the lake of burning sulfur. **“The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.”** (Revelation 19:20) The special body which Lucifer will “assume” when he comes out of the spirit world will be burned up in this lake of burning sulfur, along with the bodies of the wicked who participated in his government. God will give Lucifer a body at the beginning of the fifth trumpet so that he might physically appear before the human race. This body will be destroyed at the Second Coming, which will effectively return Lucifer to his previous location – the abyss, or spirit world. (Revelation 9:1-3; 20:1-3) Meanwhile, the rest of the wicked will be destroyed at the Second Coming with a single command that comes out of the mouth of Jesus. They will not be burned up. **“The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.”** (Revelation 19:21)

Two distinct groups of people will see the appearing of Jesus. The population of Earth at that time will be quite small. The saints, barely alive and clothed with tattered rags, will tremble at the majesty and grandeur of Jesus. They will cry out, **“. . . Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”** (Isaiah 25:9) The wicked will tremble at the majesty and grandeur of Jesus, and an overwhelming fear of justice will engulf their hate filled souls. **“Then the kings of the Earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’ ”** (Revelation 6:15)

In the coming study about the seven bowls, you will learn that the appearing of Jesus occurs over a period of ten days. The sign of His appearing will be a cloud in the eastern sky. (Revelation 16:12) As He draws nearer to Earth, the cloud will grow larger and the sky will become more violent until the rider on the white horse and His army fill the whole sky, from horizon to horizon. **“For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”** (Matthew 24:27) The lightning and thunder within the approaching cloud of glory will grow in intensity until the armies of Earth are paralyzed with fear. **“Every heart will melt and every hand go limp; every spirit will become faint and every knee become as weak as water.”** (Ezekiel 21:7) Unlike the local sightings of Lucifer during the fifth trumpet, the appearing of Jesus will not be a local event. **“Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the Earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.”** (Revelation 1:7)

Because Earth rotates on its axis in a counterclockwise direction, any object approaching Earth from space appears first in the eastern sky. As Earth rotates beneath His swelling cloud of glory, the people of Earth will have several days to look up and see Jesus approaching. **“At that time the *sign* of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the Earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.”** (Matthew 24:30, italics mine) **“Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.”** (Daniel 12:12)

### The Day of the Lord

King David wrote about the great day of the Lord’s appearing saying, **“The Earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry. Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him – the dark rain clouds of the sky. Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning.”** (Psalms 18:7-12) Joel wrote about the great day of the Lord’s vengeance saying, **“The Lord thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey his command. The day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?”** (Joel 2:11)

When the sixth seal is broken, Revelation 6:12 indicates there will be a great earthquake. This global earthquake will cause our planet to begin quivering with violent tremors. This earthquake will grow in intensity and disaster – ultimately making the islands disappear and leveling the mountains! **“No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on Earth, so tremendous was the quake. . . . Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.”**

(Revelation 16:18, 20) As this earthquake shatters the crust of Earth, there will be a special resurrection of selected people. Jesus will fulfill the promise He made two thousand years ago to resurrect the people who participated in His crucifixion. When the chief priests and religious rulers are awakened, words will not be able to describe the terror and anxiety of the leaders who demanded Jesus’ death. When they see the Righteous One they condemned as a blasphemer now sitting beside the Father, their shame and self-loathing will be indescribable. Remember the conversation between Jesus and the high priest on that Friday morning, April 7, A.D. 30? **“The high priest said to him, ‘I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.’ ‘Yes, it is as you say,’ Jesus replied. ‘But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of Heaven.’ ”** (Matthew 26:63, 64) Even the Roman soldiers who pierced the body of Jesus and divided His garment will be resurrected to see the majesty of “The Lamb of God.” (Revelation 1:7)

### **The Father Comes with Jesus**

Many people overlook the fact that when the Second Coming occurs, the Father comes to Earth with Jesus! What could keep the Father away? Who has given more for our redemption than the Father and the Son?

Look again at the words of Jesus to the high priest, **“In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of Heaven.”** (Matthew 26:64)

Compare this verse with the cry of the wicked, **“They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from [a] the face of him who sits on the throne and [b] from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their [plural] wrath has come, and who can stand?’ ”** (Revelation 6:16, 17, insertions mine) Also, consider this verse: **“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings [plural] from the East.”** (Revelation 16:12) When we examine the seven bowls, we will discover why the Father and Son are called “the Kings from the East.” For now, consider these two points: Jesus told His accusers that He would be sitting at the right hand of the Father

and coming on the clouds of Heaven. Furthermore, we know that any object approaching Earth from space appears in the east, so it is not hard to conclude that the Father and Son are the Kings from the east. The Father and the Son will appear in a light that will be brighter than a welder's arc. The righteous will tremble with awe and respect, but the wicked will run for cover faster than cockroaches hiding from light. The display of Jesus' glory at the Second Coming will eclipse the powerful display of authority that He demonstrated on Mount Sinai. **"When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet [voice] and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.'"** (Exodus 20:18, 19, insertion mine)

#### **Saints Rescued First**

The Second Coming of Jesus will be marked with glory, redemption and destruction. Jesus will reveal His wrath against sin and sinners in a never to be forgotten display of sovereign glory. Jesus will reveal His unfailing love for the people who put their faith in Him by calling the righteous dead to life and gathering up all the saints to meet Him in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17) In our coming study about the seven bowls, we will learn that the righteous will be gathered from Earth to meet the Lord in the air *before* the Lord destroys the wicked with the sharp sword that comes out of His mouth. The wicked will witness the redemption of the saints, and the righteous of all ages will see the destruction of the wicked with their own eyes. **"Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked."** (Psalm 91:8, KJV) The rescue of the righteous and the destruction of the wicked will cause a new wave of glory and praise for Jesus. Perhaps this song will be repeated by the saints many times. **"They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: 'Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.'"** (Revelation 15:2-4)

Look at the dimensions surrounding the life of Jesus. He experienced false arrest, accusations of blasphemy, torture, humiliation and death at the hands of men. He experienced subjection and the second death (the penalty for sin) at the hands of the Father. Because He went through these experiences without sinning, He alone is worthy to exonerate God

and redeem man! At the Second Coming, He will show His true identity: Almighty God. Is there anyone else like Him? The Second Coming will be the greatest epiphany ever seen. The glory of Jesus, His Eternal Majesty, as King of kings and Lord of lords, the King of Everlasting Glory will be revealed. When we see the love, the life and experience of Jesus, we will realize there is no one in the universe like Him. It is only right that a full revelation of Jesus will take place. The Father wants the universe to know that Jesus is not a lesser God than Himself. What a gracious Father! There is no jealousy for highest honor among the members of the Godhead. Jesus has the same attributes as the Father and the Father will be delighted beyond words to have this glorious information disclosed.

### Set Your Clock

I like to think of the Second Coming as an inaugural process that takes 1,335 days to complete. The inaugural calendar is divided into two segments. The first segment consists of “seven first plagues” and the last segment consists of “seven last plagues.”

### The Great Tribulation

|----- 1335 Days -----|  
 X -----1260 Days-----X -- 4---|-----70 Days-----|X

### Seven First Plagues

### Seven Last Plagues

Chart 10.6

Many people argue that no one knows the day or hour of Christ's return. **“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”** (Matthew 24:36) Jesus did say that no one knows the day or hour of His return (and this includes me). However, once the Great Tribulation begins, the date of Christ's return will no longer be a secret because Jesus has given us a comprehensive timetable of end time events in the books of Daniel and Revelation. *This is why Jesus put eighteen prophetic time periods in these two books.* You will be able to start your countdown clock for the appearing of Jesus with the first display of His sovereign authority. This display will consist of the following five physical events:

1. Flashes of lightning
2. Mysterious voices saying things
3. Peals of thunder
4. Global earthquake



### 5. Fiery hail

This display of sovereign power will occur three times. Look at Chart 10.6 and notice three instances of the letter “X.” (Revelation 8:5, 11:19, 16:18)

The first “X” marks the breaking of the fourth seal. The sovereignty of Jesus will be declared throughout Earth by a series of five physical phenomena. The first “X” marks (a) the beginning of the judgment of the living, (b) the beginning of the Great Tribulation, and (c) the beginning of the seven trumpets (seven first plagues). These phenomena will arrest the attention of mankind. Christ’s second display of sovereign power occurs 1,260 days later. Once again, the same five physical phenomena will declare the sovereignty of Jesus.

The second “X” marks (a) the close of His judgment bar, and (b) the beginning of the seven bowls (seven last plagues). This display of power will indicate that Jesus has terminated His intercession for sinners. He has judged mankind and determined who will inherit Earth and who will be destroyed. (The four days shown on the chart represent the 3.5 days that the Two Witnesses lie in the street of the great city which will be covered in our study on the Two Witnesses.) The third display of sovereign power marks the close of 6,000 years of sin.

The last “X” marks the Second Coming of Jesus. The same five physical phenomena also attend the Second Coming and these phenomena contribute to the termination of life on planet Earth. The wicked will be slain by fire or sword and the righteous will be taken to Heaven. Lucifer and his angels will be returned to the abyss. Earth will be desolate for one thousand years of sabbatical rest – the seventh millennium.

Now that you have some idea of when Jesus declares His sovereignty, take a few moments to read the following texts. After you have examined each passage, make sure that you can associate each passage with its “X” in Chart 10.6, and while you are reading, look for the five physical phenomena just mentioned.

#### **Censer Cast Down**

The first declaration of sovereignty marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation: **“Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the Earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there**

came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.” (Revelation 8:5-7)

### Seventh Trumpet

The second declaration of sovereignty marks the end of God’s mercy and salvation and the beginning of the seven bowls: **“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.” Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.”** (Revelation 11:15, 19)

### Seventh Bowl

The third declaration of sovereignty marks the end of 6,000 years of sin. The wicked will be destroyed and the land will rest from the works of sin for a Sabbath millennium: **“The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, “It is done!” Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on Earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.”** (Revelation 16:17-21)

After reviewing these passages, it is clear that the five physical events are not random in nature. In fact, they are identical in all three cases. Because the same events occur three times at strategic moments during the Great Tribulation, we know that Jesus is deliberately making a show of power to the people on Earth. Each declaration of power evidently grows in intensity because the final declaration of Christ’s sovereignty destroys everything and everyone on Earth. Jesus will totally devastate the earth. It will be made uninhabitable, at the Second Coming. **“See, the day of the Lord is coming – a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger – to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners**

**within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.”** (Isaiah 13:9-11)

### Summary

The breaking of the sixth seal will be a revelation of the glory of Jesus. He will have all power and authority. He will destroy His enemies and rescue His children. I can think of one more reason (and I am sure there are many more) why the sixth seal is a revelation of the glory of Jesus. Before I present this reason, let us review the setting.

Before sin began in Heaven, Jesus identified closely with the angels by living among them in the form of an angel. His name was Michael, the archangel. (For a more complete study on the subject of Michael, please see Chapter 2 of my book *Jesus, The Alpha and The Omega*.) Lucifer, the highest of created beings, became jealous of Michael because he wanted the position, worship and adoration that belonged to Michael. Because of jealousy, Lucifer became anti-Christ. A third of the angels listened to Lucifer’s misery and joined in his rebellion. At that time, the glory that belonged to Jesus was shrouded because He lived among the angels as one of them, that is, as their companion. (Hebrews 1:9)

Thousands of years later, Jesus came to Earth to live among us in the form of a man. A few people received Him as Messiah, but most of the people rejected Him. **“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”** (John 1:11) To the people on Earth who saw Him, He looked like a very ordinary man. (Isaiah 53:2) When Jesus was on Earth, the glory that belonged to Jesus was shrouded by His humanity. The purpose of the seven seals is to disclose Jesus. During the Great Tribulation, the glory of Jesus will be shrouded from mankind until He physically appears at the Second Coming. Jesus does not want His creatures worshiping His power, position, or glory! He does not want to be a superstar or an icon! Jesus wants to live among His created beings so that we can know and love God. The sixth seal is a revelation of Jesus’ glory and it proves forever that Jesus has the same glory and authority as the Father.

Artists depict Jesus on the cross wearing a loincloth because it would be too offensive to show what really happened. The Romans stripped criminals of all their clothing so that their shame would haunt them in the life hereafter. Jesus was willing to bear our shame. He was disrobed

and publically humiliated because He loved us enough to die in our place. Amazingly, Jesus will be disrobed once again! This time, there will be no shame. We will see Him for who He is – Almighty God. **“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.”** (Isaiah 9:6) **“Who is He, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty – He is the King of glory.”** (Psalm 24:10) This is why the sixth seal is a revelation of the glory of Jesus.

### Seal #7 – A Campaign of Knowledge – The Deity of Jesus Exposed

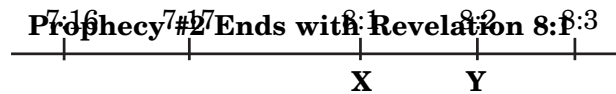
**“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven for about half an hour.”** (Revelation 8:1)

Even though the sentence in Revelation 8:1 is part of the second apocalyptic prophecy in Revelation (7:1-8:1), the seventh seal will be discussed in this chapter because conceptually, the seven seals belong together. Many people are confused by the seventh seal because it seems disconnected from the first six seals. There is a good reason for this. Rule One of apocalyptic prophecy says, *“Each apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning and ending point in time and events occur in the order given.”* We see this rule at work in the apocalyptic prophecy of the seven seals. Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life in 1798, then He broke the first seal, then the second, etc. The first apocalyptic prophecy in Revelation begins with Revelation 4:1 (the beginning point in time for this prophecy is 1798) and this prophecy ends with the sixth seal, which is, the Second Coming in Revelation 6:17 (the ending point in time for this prophecy). Because the *next* verse after Revelation 6:17 does not happen chronologically *after* the Second Coming, the order in Revelation’s text is broken. Therefore, according to Rule One, this forces the beginning of a new prophecy. In other words, the sealing of the 144,000 (Revelation 7:1) does not happen *after* the kings and generals of the Earth hide in the caves and cry out for the mountains to fall on them, so Prophecy #2 begins with Revelation 7:1.

6:15	6:16	6:17	7:1	7:2
<u>Prophecy #1 Ends with Revelation 6:17</u>				
		X	Y	

X = verse 6:17– Second Coming

**Y** = verse 7:1 – 144,000 sealed – chronological order broken –  
Prophecy #2 begins.



**X** = verse 8:1 – Seventh seal

**Y** = verse 8:2 – Seven trumpets begin – chronological order broken –  
Prophecy #3 begins

Chart 10.7

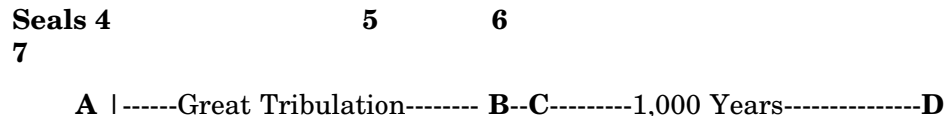
Look at Chart 10.7 and notice how the second apocalyptic prophecy begins with Revelation 7:1 and it proceeds in chronological order through Revelation 8:1. Then, in Revelation 8:2, the chronological order is broken and the third apocalyptic prophecy (the seven trumpets) begins.

Revelation 8:1 contains one short sentence describing the opening of the seventh seal. Of course, if you know nothing about the seals, one sentence does not offer much. Centuries ago, when the Bible was divided into chapters and verses for purposes of reference and study, translators did not know what to do with the sentence describing the seventh seal. This one sentence does not seem to fit within Revelation 7 which deals with the 144,000, and it does not belong with the seven trumpets. Since they could not physically relocate the sentence to the end of Chapter 6 so that the seventh seal would follow after the sixth seal, they decided to make this sentence the first verse of Chapter 8. (Of course, they did not know about the rules of interpretation because Daniel had not been unsealed, but to their credit, they did not tamper or alter the order of the text that John wrote! They did not move this one short sentence from its all important location!)

The second prophecy in Revelation (Revelation 7:1 through 8:1) perfectly conforms to Rule One. There are three events in this prophecy. (See A, C, D in Chart 10.8.) God put these three events together in one apocalyptic story because the rules of interpretation produce a matrix. We have seen in our study on Daniel how this matrix provides solutions to timing that cannot be discovered otherwise and the same is true in

Revelation. The rules produce the matrix and the matrix reveals the timing. Notice the chronological flow in the second apocalyptic prophecy:

## Apocalyptic Prophecy #2: Revelation 7:1 to 8:1



- A. The sealing of the 144,000 just before the global earthquake
- B. The Second Coming – sixth seal
- C. The numberless multitude that will come out of the Great Tribulation are seen standing before the throne in Heaven
- D. The seventh seal broken / Book of Life opened

Chart 10.8

After studying Chart 10.8, you might ask, “How do we know the seventh seal is broken at the end of the millennium?” The answer might surprise you.

- First, the Bible indicates the Book of Life is separate and distinct from other books in Heaven.
- Second, the Bible indicates the Book of Life is opened once, at the end of the one thousand years. **“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”** (Revelation 20:12)
- Third, evidence was presented in Segments I and II of this chapter showing why the Book of Life is the book sealed with seven seals. So, the Book of Life is opened when the seventh seal is broken.
- Fourth, the seventh seal is broken open after the numberless multitude have been taken to Heaven and are seen standing around the throne. Consider the timing of this verse: **“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. . . .**

**Then one of the elders asked me, ‘These in white robes – who are they, and where did they come from?’ I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’ ” (Revelation 7:9,13, 14)**

So, the saints in verses 9-14 came out of the Great Tribulation and are seen standing around the throne. Then, the seventh seal is opened in verse 8:1. The location of verse 8:1 forces the seventh seal to be opened *after* the numberless multitude are in Heaven.

When we align the matrix of events which Rule One produces, the opening of the Book of Life occurs at the end of the millennium and the breaking of the seventh seal occurs after the Second Coming, so the seventh seal has to be broken at the end of the millennium. This conclusion harmonizes with the idea that the Book of Life is sealed until the end of the thousand years. Once the seventh seal is broken, everything written in the Book of Life will be exposed! **“If anyone’s name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”** (Revelation 20:15)

	1798	1844	Today	Great Tribulation	1,000 Years	White Throne
<b>Prophecy #3 Six Trumpets</b>				1234 5 6		
<b>Prophecy #2 144,000</b>			A	1,335 Days	B	C
<b>Prophecy #1 Six Seals</b>	1 2	3		4 5 6		

### Revelation’s Matrix Begins to Grow

Chart 10.9

- A** = The sealing of the 144,000
- B** = The numberless multitude standing around the throne
- C** = The seventh seal

### The Matrix Grows

In Segment III, we discovered that the timing of the first seal is a critical



matter. Because some things have to be understood before they can make sense and other things have to make sense before they can be believed, the books of Daniel and Revelation are hard to understand at first. God is very clever. He had the cryptic books of Daniel and Revelation written out thousands of years ago so they would be included and widely distributed as part of the Bible. But, God had them written in such a way that no one could figure out what they meant until the book of Daniel would be unsealed at the appointed time of the end. However, once the rules of interpretation were discovered, the books of Daniel and Revelation become perfectly harmonious because the four rules produce a matrix that determines the timing for everything written in these two books! We saw the value of this matrix when we were able to determine that the seventh seal on the Book of Life would be broken at the end of the millennium.

Please examine Chart 10.9 again and notice an interesting feature. Prophecy #1 in Revelation (Revelation 4:1-6:17) covers six seals, and then Prophecy #2 begins with a discussion about the 144,000, but ends with the seventh seal. (Revelation 7:1-8:1) The same thing happens with the seven trumpets! Prophecy #3 (Revelation 8:2-9:21) discusses six trumpets, and then Prophecy #4 begins with a discussion on the Two Witnesses. (Revelation 10:1-11:14) Then, Prophecy #5, which describes the seventh trumpet, follows Prophecy #4. The separation of the seventh seal from the six seals and the seventh trumpet from the six trumpets has been a mystery for centuries. I believe God had Revelation written this way to force us into using valid rules of interpretation. Then, when the book of Daniel would be unsealed and valid rules of interpretation discovered, the all important matrix would reveal the timing of each event presented in Daniel, as well as Revelation.

### **Great White Throne Judgment**

At the end of the seventh millennium, the holy city, New Jerusalem, will descend from Heaven with all the saints inside. (Revelation 21:2) After the city comes to rest, the wicked will be resurrected from their graves. (Revelation 20:5) The wicked, from the time of Cain to the last person who was killed at the Second Coming, will number in the tens of billions. Keep in mind that 99% of the wicked did not see the Second Coming because they were sound asleep. On that sober day, two great classes of people will gaze at each other. The saints, already a thousand years old but free of the aging process, will see the miserable and degenerate condition of the wicked. The wicked will rise from their graves just as they went to their graves. They will be astonished as they study the gleaming walls of New Jerusalem. The wicked will see family members,

friends and individuals who they regarded as poor, weak, unsophisticated and uneducated. Generals, kings, presidents, scholars, wealthy tycoons, religious leaders and greedy employers will be found standing outside the city. (Matthew 7:14; 19:24)

Jesus will resurrect the wicked for three reasons:

1. First, He will confront them with the results of His judgment bar. Jesus will have a face to face meeting with each of His created beings. He wants every wicked person to know that He personally investigated every record and He wants every wicked person to know why that person was not granted eternal life. To put His investigation and decision beyond controversy, Jesus will open the books of deeds and present the evidence to each person, showing each wicked person the record of his life. Each wicked person will be forced to face unvarnished truth. **“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”** (Ecclesiastes 12:14) **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”** (2 Corinthians 5:10) Jesus will conclude this segment of the Great White Throne judgment by saying that He could not save anyone who committed the unpardonable sin, and the sound of His gavel will declare a finished work. The wicked were denied eternal life because they rejected the authority of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 12:31, 32) After reviewing the evidence and hearing Jesus’ decision, the wicked will kneel out of fear and confess with a heart like Esau, **“In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength. . . .”** (Isaiah 45:24) Remember, Esau regretted that he sold his birthright for a dish of food, but his heart remained unchanged. (Hebrews 12:17)
2. The second reason Jesus resurrects the wicked is so they can provide restitution. During the millennium, the saints were required to go over the records of the wicked and determine the amount of restitution each wicked person must pay. **“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!”** (1 Corinthians 6:2, 3) **“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus**

**and because of the word of God. . . .”** (Revelation 20:4)

This will shock some people, but the golden rule is iron clad. It cannot be violated. “As you did unto others, the same will be done unto you – with additional penalties.” Jesus said, **“For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”** (Matthew 7:2) The doctrine of judicial equilibrium is a marvelous study. Basically, it teaches that whenever we do wrong, God requires that we make every effort to restore the damage and make it right. If we refuse to make things right, God will see to it that restitution is extracted at the appointed time, even if we are unwilling. This is why Paul wrote, **“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”** (Romans 12:19) During the millennium, the victims of crimes will determine the amount of restitution that will be extracted from their wicked assailants, and the currency of restitution will be paid in full through suffering in a lake of burning sulfur. The wicked will burn and suffer according to the decisions made by their victims. God’s law demands it. Contrary to what most Christians believe today, God does not forgive sin. He is willing to transfer the guilt of sin away from the sinner, but in God’s economy, sin *always* requires atonement. Only after restitution has been totally paid will the wicked be allowed to perish. Many wicked people have committed horrible crimes and gone to their grave thinking they got away with murder. Can you imagine their surprise when they learn they have been awakened from the sleep of death to provide restitution for their deeds by suffering? Do not forget, the saints will also pass judgment on Lucifer and each demon. The culpability of Lucifer and his demons will be completely exposed and the saints will judge them during the millennium. In the end, justice will be served to achieve the perfect equilibrium that God’s wrath requires.

3. Of course, the third reason for the resurrection of the wicked is the breaking of the seventh seal. This will be the only moment in the history of the universe when everyone who had life is alive. Billions of people and angels will be present. The wicked will be positioned outside the city with Lucifer and his angels, and the saints will be positioned inside the city with the angels of God. At this point in time, Jesus has something to say to everyone (literally everyone who has ever lived). When Jesus breaks the

seventh seal, He will show angels and humans alike that He is an Eternal God, a member of the eternal Trinity, possessing every attribute of God. As such, He was responsible for the creation of everyone present and that He was not willing that anyone should perish. He will explain that He was willing to die for angel or human before He created them. The love of Jesus for His creation will be revealed to every being that draws breath. This touching revelation takes half an hour. Perhaps the presentation will be presented with clips of events that actually happened, like a giant movie, using the sky as a giant screen. Everyone will understand the magnitude of Christ's love. Everyone will know that He is God. Everyone will see the Creation, the Fall, the Redemption and the Restoration. Everyone will see that Jesus truly loved His children and that He was willing to die – from the beginning – for anyone that sinned without defiance.

After the seventh seal is broken and the half hour presentation comes to an end, Jesus will then show what the Father knew from the beginning. The books of record and the Book of Life will be found to be identical. The choices of angels and humans alike were recorded as they happened, and even though the Father foreknew the rise and price of sin, He authorized the creation of life anyway. (Hebrews 1:2) After the Book of Life has been opened, seven eternal truths will be confirmed before the assembled host:

1. God has perfect foreknowledge. He does not use His foreknowledge to manipulate the choices and affections of His children. God treats and respects His children on the basis of infinite love.
2. God is love. Even though He foreknew the rise of sin and the price of redemption, He created children and gave them freedom anyway.
3. God grants the power of choice to His children. They are free to love Him and serve Him or they are free to hate Him and rebel against Him. God does not control or manipulate the choices of His children.
4. God's ways are not righteous because He arbitrarily declares Himself righteous. God's ways are righteous because He has been proven to be righteous during the presence of sin and rebellion. The Book of Life will prove that God uses His

omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence to insure the eternal rule of the law of love throughout His expanding universe. He does not use these incredible powers to secure His position on the throne.

5. God is unbelievably humble and unselfish. As God, Jesus was willing to forfeit His eternal existence so that the offspring of Adam and Eve might have the possibility of recovering all that was lost through sin.
6. God's government is based on principles of righteousness and justice. Because God is subject to His own unchangeable laws, Jesus agreed to die as a perfect substitute in man's place so that everyone who believed in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
7. Now that the knowledge of good and evil has become universal, people redeemed from the penalty of sin will forever use their influence to prevent sin from occurring again.

When the universe comprehends these demonstrated truths, the saints will fall on their faces before Jesus saying, Jesus is Great! Jesus is just too good and too great to describe. Singlehandedly, He exonerated the government of God and redeemed sinners from their sins! What a God! The angels of God will rejoice at this revelation of Jesus as they see the contents of the Book of Life. Everyone present knows that the Father's character has been revealed through Jesus. The saints and angels will fall on their faces before Jesus praising Him for His goodness and generosity to them. Saints and angels of God will declare again that Jesus is worthy! The Godhead can be trusted. The Godhead is worthy of nonnegotiable faith.

As saints and angels of God rejoice over the contents of the Book of Life, Lucifer, his demons and the wicked multitude are moved to anger. There is no one to blame for their position outside the city, but themselves. There is nothing they can do to save themselves from the suffering that is about to be extracted from their flesh. As they gaze on the glorious holy city and the rejoicing saints, they feel darkness, loneliness, despair, and strangely, their hatred for God rises. Lucifer seizes the moment, he marshals the mighty host to make war against Jesus, inspiring them to take the city by force: **"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.”** (Revelation 20:9, 10) This torment, which occurs day and night for ever and ever, reflects the demands of restitution. The wicked will suffer in full until their debt is paid in full. **“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.”** (Revelation 21:8)

The book of Revelation indicates that Jesus will create a new Heaven and a new Earth. (Revelation 21:5) After doing this, Jesus will do something even greater! **“Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”** (1 Corinthians 15:24-26) Jesus will once again hand over His exceeding great authority to the Father so that He might live among His creation as one of us. What does this action say about the character of God? I can think of nothing other than this: God is love.

### **Chapter 10 Summary**

Even though this chapter was broken into four segments, this has been a very long chapter. I hope you have found this information helpful. The next time you read through this chapter, it will make more sense because you will know the end from the beginning. The story of the seven seals is huge and I am very grateful for the opportunity to share the results of my investigation with you. The first apocalyptic prophecy in Revelation is dedicated to the seven seals because there is no grander topic than the revealing of all that Jesus is. He is worthy to receive worship, praise, honor, strength, glory, wisdom and power. Even in our wildest dreams, we could not have invented a God with the attributes of Jesus! He is more than we can possibly understand.

In summary, the Father wrote the Book of Life before life was created. He prerecorded the history of angels and humans. He then sealed the book with seven seals so that no one could view the contents of the book until the appropriate time. In 1798, Jesus was found worthy to receive the book and begin breaking the seals. As each seal is broken, a new revelation about Jesus occurs:

**Seal 1:** The salvation of Jesus

**Seal 2:** The teachings of Jesus

**Seal 3:** The judgment bar of Jesus

**Seal 4:** The authority of Jesus

**Seal 5:** The faith of Jesus

**Seal 6:** The glory of Jesus

**Seal 7:** The deity of Jesus

As we look at the prophetic matrix, the fourth seal is the next seal to be broken. This seal marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The stage is set and the hour is almost here for Earth's final curtain. For six thousand years, Earth has been a theater of conflict between good and evil. The drama of sin is almost over. We are very close to the Second Coming. The next revelation of Jesus will be awful and awesome at the same time. The declaration of His sovereignty will soon occur. (Remember the five physical phenomena?)

At the end of the seventh millennium, the drama of sin will come to a close when the seventh seal is broken and the contents of the Book of Life are exposed. Because the Book of Life will be found to be identical with the books of record, the Father will eternally silence the charge that He used His foreknowledge to manipulate the choices of His children and the outcome of events. The universe will see that even though God knows everything and has all power, He can be explicitly trusted to respect the power of choice that He grants to each of His children. Every question about His integrity, character and government will be resolved when the seventh seal is broken because an open Book of Life will say everything that needs to be said.





# Chapter II

## The 144,000 and the Numberless Multitude

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**“Even on my *servants*, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. ”**

– Joel 2:29, italics mine

### Who Are They?

Ever since John penned the book of Revelation in A.D. 95, Bible students have debated and discussed questions about the 144,000. Who are they? What is their purpose? When will they appear? How will they be recognized? Where will they appear? Why are they numbered? Why is their Jewish lineage important? Before we examine these and other questions, carefully review the first eight verses of Revelation 7:

**“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:**

**Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand.**

**Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand.**

**Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.**

**Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand.**

**Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand.**

**Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.**

**Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand.**

**Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand.**

**Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.**

**Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand.**

**Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand.**

**Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.”**

(Revelation 7:1-8, KJV)

You may notice, after reviewing the twelve tribes listed in Revelation 7:5-8, that the tribe of Dan is missing and the tribe of Ephraim is renamed. (The tribe of Joseph is another name for the tribe of Ephraim.) These nuances reflect certain developments that occurred during the history of ancient Israel.

Israel (also known as Jacob) and his family moved into Egypt because of the famine in Canaan (Genesis 46). He happily reunited with his “long lost son,” Joseph, and he adopted Joseph’s two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, as his own. (Genesis 48:5) This adoption elevated the two grandsons of Israel to a position that was equal with their eleven uncles. Eventually, Ephraim and Manasseh became leaders of tribes bearing their names. (Joshua 14:4; Numbers 1 and 26.) This development explains why, at the time of the Exodus, the actual number of tribes that departed Egypt totaled thirteen, but they were formally counted as twelve. (Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 33)

When Moses ascended Mount Sinai to meet with God for forty days, many Israelites fell into idolatry while Moses was gone by worshipping the golden calf which Aaron built. When Moses returned to the camp, he called for volunteers to kill the defiant idolaters. The Levites immediately stepped forward and they killed about 3,000 of their kinfolk. When the Lord saw the Levites were willing to kill their kindred to honor His covenant, He exalted the Levites above the other tribes by making them His priests. (Exodus 32:25-29; Deuteronomy 33:8-11) This may sound strange, but when God exalted the Levites as priests, He eliminated their inheritance. The Levites were not given a share of the promised land. Instead, God gave the Levites a portion of the bounty from the land – the tithes and offerings<sup>1</sup> that would be forthcoming. (Numbers 18:20-24)

### **Points to Ponder**

The tribe of Dan is not included in the list of tribes in Revelation 7. Evidently, this tribe was destroyed. Although the Bible does not explain

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<sup>1</sup> God’s wisdom is both elegant and astonishing. By giving the Levites the tithes and offerings, the Lord made the Levites *dependent* on Israel’s faithfulness to Him. If the Levites stayed close to God and were faithful to their high calling of teaching and nurturing His people in the way they should go, the nation of Israel would prosper and there would be sufficient tithes and offerings to care for the whole tribe of Levi! On the other hand, if the Levites failed to “nurture the body of Christ” in word and deed, idolatry and rebellion would follow and the end result was that the Levites would be the first to suffer from national apostasy. (Deuteronomy 28)

the disappearance of the tribe of Dan, certainly, the 144,000 will come from *all* the tribes of Israel. **“Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from *all* the tribes of Israel.”** (Italics mine) Since Dan is not listed, we have to conclude that Dan became extinct. Dan occupied the northern part of Canaan which was the “wild frontier” in those days. (Joshua 19:40-47) Because Dan would have been the first to encounter hostile armies coming down from the north, the exposure may have contributed to this tribe’s demise. Dan’s geographical position in the promised land became a colloquialism. The northern and southern boundaries of Israel were frequently described with the words, “from Dan to Beersheba.” (Judges 20:1; 1 Samuel 3:20; 1 Kings 4:25)

The inclusion of the tribe of Levi in Revelation 7 is significant for two reasons. First, this is the only place in the Bible where the Levites are numbered as one of the twelve tribes after the death of Moses. (Deuteronomy 33) Second, even though the tribe of Levi was exalted above the other tribes in ancient times, they *are not* exalted above the other tribes when it comes to the sealing of the 144,000. There will be as many Benjamites as Levites. The demotion of the Levites is explained by the apostle Paul in Hebrews 7 when he explains that God abolished the Levitical priesthood due to the implementation of a new covenant.

One final point in this section should be noticed. Revelation 7:5-8 indicates that when the sealing of the 144,000 occurs, each tribe is larger than 12,000 people. For example, the Bible says, **“Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand.”** The existence of each tribe will prove to be interesting later in this study because, currently, no one knows the identity or whereabouts of the twelve tribes. Fire destroyed the genealogical records of Israel in A.D. 70 when the Roman general, Titus, destroyed Jerusalem. In light of the language used in Revelation 7, the absence of genealogical records is interesting because the identity of the twelve tribes is known only to God at the present time. Of course, the twelve tribes have to exist at the time of the end because 12,000 will be selected and sealed from each tribe.

### **Who Are the 144,000?**

Because the book of Daniel has been unsealed, we have four valid rules of interpretation. Because we have the rules, the identity, mission and timing of the 144,000 can be determined. Since Rule Two of apocalyptic prophecy requires that all specifications be met in order to produce a fulfillment, please review the following specifications concerning the 144,000. A discussion about each specification will follow:

1. John calls the 144,000, “servants,” “servants the prophets,” and

“servants of God” in the book of Revelation. (Revelation 6:11, 7:3, 10:7, 19:2)

2. The four angels do not hurt Earth until the 144,000 are sealed. (Revelation 7:3)
3. The 144,000 will be the first to receive the seal of God. (Revelation 7:3) They will be presented to God as the *firstfruits* of the Great Tribulation. They will not be defiled with women and they will travel with Jesus wherever He goes. (Revelation 14:4)
4. Unlike the *numberless* multitude who will come out of the Great Tribulation, the 144,000 will be *numbered*. (Revelation 7:5-8, 9, 14)
5. The 144,000 will experience and endure the sufferings of Christ. They will be honored above the rest of the redeemed. No one else will be able to sing their song. (Revelation 14:1, 3)
6. No lie or falsehood will be found in the mouths of the 144,000. (Revelation 14:5)
7. The 144,000 will visibly wear the names of the Father and Son on their foreheads throughout eternity. (Revelation 14:1; Revelation 22:3, 4)
8. The 144,000 will be Jews, descendants of Abraham. (Revelation 7:5-8)

Now that these eight specifications have been summarized, a few remarks about each one may prove to be helpful.

#### **Specification #1 – Are the 144,000 “Servants the Prophets?”**

John calls the 144,000, “servants,” “servants the prophets,” and “servants of God” in the book of Revelation. (Revelation 6:11, 7:3, 10:7, 19:2) Observe John’s use of language in the following texts (For the sake of clarity, I have inserted a few words in these verses and enclosed them in brackets, but especially notice the words I have emphasized with bold print.):

1. **Fifth Seal: Revelation 6:11** “Then each of them [the martyrs] was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow **servants** and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.”
2. **The Delay: Revelation 7:3, 4** “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the **servants** of our God. Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: **144,000** from all the tribes of Israel.”
3. **The Seventh Trumpet: Revelation 10:7, 11:15, 18** “But in the

days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to **his servants the prophets**. . . . The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in Heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever. . . .’ The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging [avenging the blood of] the dead [martyrs], and for rewarding your **servants the prophets** and **your saints** and those who reverence your name, both small and great – and for destroying those who destroy the Earth.”

4. **The Third Bowl: Revelation 16:4-6** “The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: ‘You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your **saints** and **prophets** [the martyrs], and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.’ ”

#### **John Distinguishes between Prophets and Saints**

If we compare these four passages to one another, we find that John consistently distinguishes between God’s servants and God’s saints. For example, in the first text, Revelation 6:11, John distinguishes between “servants” and “brothers.” Since the fifth seal occurs during the latter part of the Great Tribulation we have to ask, “What ‘servants’ of God will be slain during the Great Tribulation? Could the “servants” in Revelation 6:11 be the 144,000 “servants” mentioned in Revelation 7:3? Yes! Here is why:

In the fourth text, Revelation 16:4-6, John distinguishes between “saints” and “prophets.” This particular text forces a distinctive wedge between a group of people called “saints” and a group of people called “prophets” because of timing. We know that the third bowl will be poured out in the final days of the Great Tribulation (during the seven last plagues). The Bible says the third bowl will be specifically directed to those who shed the blood of “saints” and “prophets.” The book of Revelation identifies the prophets who are killed by the people who receive the third plague. The 144,000 “servants” in Revelation 7:3 are the “prophets” slain in Revelation 16:4-6. Notice how this connection is made.

The third text says that just before the seventh trumpet sounds, “The mystery of God will be accomplished just as He announced to His *servants* the prophets.” What *prophets* will be informed about “the

mystery of God” prior to the sounding of the seventh trumpet? Could the *servants the prophets* in Revelation 10:7 be the 144,000 *servants* mentioned in Revelation 7:3? The internal harmony within Revelation says, “Yes!” The 144,000 will be a distinct group of people who are separate and distinct from the numberless multitude who come out of the Great Tribulation.

Look again at the third text. When the seventh trumpet sounds in Revelation 11:18, loud voices in Heaven will urgently proclaim that the time has arrived for Jesus to avenge the killing of His “prophets” and “saints.” Once again John distinguishes between a group of people called prophets and a group of people called saints, and he indicates that people in both groups will suffer death during the Great Tribulation.

Therefore:

- When we consider John’s repetitive distinction between saints and prophets . . .
- When we consider the 144,000 will be called God’s “servants”. . .
- When we consider that many (if not all) of God’s prophets will die because of the Word of God and the testimony they maintain (martyrdom during the fifth seal) . . .
- When we consider that God’s mystery (announced to His servants the prophets) will be finished just before the seventh trumpet sounds . . .
- When we consider that God will avenge the death of His saints *and prophets* by giving blood thirsty murderers blood to drink during the time of the third bowl . . .
- When we combine these points, our understanding of 144,000 “servants” expands into 144,000 “servants the prophets.”

Before the Great Tribulation begins, God will select, empower, and seal 144,000 servants who will serve Him as prophets during the Great Tribulation. These people will speak for God. Because of religious arrogance and gross ignorance, most of these servants of God will suffer the fate of prophets in ages past. (Matthew 23:37)

### **A Job Title**

Perhaps a larger selection of Bible texts will clarify why John differentiates between saints and prophets. The 144,000 are called “servants” in Revelation 7:3 because this word expresses their calling. The word “prophet” denotes their mission. When the two terms



“servants – the prophets” are brought together, the term becomes a job title. Please review the following texts (many more texts are in the Bible) and notice how the title, “servants *and* servants the prophets” is applied (I have emphasized certain words by putting them in bold text):

**2 Kings 17:22, 23** “The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them until the Lord removed them from his presence, as he had **warned** through all his **servants the prophets**. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there.”

**Jeremiah 7:25, 26** “From the time your forefathers left Egypt until now, day after day, again and again I sent you my **servants the prophets**. But they did not **listen** to me or pay attention. They were stiff-necked and did more evil than their forefathers.”

**Ezekiel 38:16, 17** “. . . In days to come, O Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘Are you not the one I **spoke** of in former days by my **servants the prophets** of Israel?’ ”

**Daniel 9:6, 10** “[Oh Lord,] We have not **listened** to your **servants the prophets**, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. . . we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his **servants the prophets**.”

**Joel 2:28, 29** “And afterward, I will pour out **my Spirit** on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on **my servants**, both men and women, I will pour out **my Spirit** in those days.”

The Bible uses the title, “servants the prophets” nineteen times and in every case this title identifies special individuals whom God *selected* to speak on His behalf. Of course, the word “servants” can be used in a broader sense to mean subjects, slaves, employees and believers. (Genesis 24:34; 1 Corinthians 4:1) But the context in Revelation 7 indicates the 144,000 servants of God will not be ordinary servants. When we realize that God has delayed destroying the Earth until 144,000 servants are sealed, we know they will not be ordinary people!

Notice how the word “servants” is used within the context of Joel 2:28-31. The Lord told Joel, “**And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men**

**will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my *servants*, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the Heavens and on the Earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The Sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”** (Joel 2:30, 31, italics mine)

These verses pointed forward from Joel’s day to “the great and dreadful day of the Lord” that would have occurred after the expiration of the seventy weeks under “Plan A.” Because Israel rejected Christ, “Plan A” was abandoned and “Plan B” was implemented. Peter did not know that “Plan A” had been abandoned, so when the Holy Spirit was manifested at the Feast of Pentecost, he naturally thought the “last days” predicted by Joel had arrived and this is why he quoted from Joel 2. (See his remarks in Acts 2:15-21) Because Revelation 9 through 11 (Plan B) parallels Joel 2 (Plan A), we can be sure the Lord will pour out His Spirit on *all* people (all flesh, KJV) during the Great Tribulation. Furthermore, we can be sure that God will generously pour out His Spirit “*even on my servants, both men and women.*” Joel’s distinction between “all people” and God’s servants is important. In Revelation 7, John distinguished between a numbered group of servants and a numberless group of people. The phrase in Joel 2, “*even on my servants,*” emphasizes that God will not only pour out His Spirit on all people during the last days, but He will also elevate His servants *even* higher by giving them a greater measure of Holy Spirit power than His “servants” characteristically have had in ages past.

### **Summary**

We close the first specification on the 144,000 with a summary deducted from the evidence examined thus far: Even though there is no way to determine who the twelve tribes of Israel are, we know the twelve tribes of Israel exist because God will select and seal 12,000 from each tribe before the four angels hurt Earth. As faithful *servants* of Jesus Christ, they will do everything their Master commands. As *prophets* of Jesus, they will deliver “the testimony of Jesus” during the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 1:9; 12:17; 19:10) The 144,000 will suffer enormously because of their words. Many, if not all, of the 144,000 will perish “because of the Word of God and the testimony they maintain.” (Revelation 6:9) John often distinguishes between God’s “servants the prophets” and ordinary saints because they are separate groups of people.

### **Specification #2 – Timing**

After the 144,000 are sealed, the four winds of God's wrath will be released and the Great Tribulation will begin. According to the specifications of the fourth seal, the number of casualties will be 25% of Earth's population. Jesus will initiate the Great Tribulation with sudden and overwhelming destruction. (1 Thessalonians 5:3) *The punitive judgments in the fourth seal, the four winds of Revelation 7, and the first four trumpets harmoniously align.* (See Chart 11.1.) At this very moment, the only thing holding back the commencement of the Great Tribulation is a single command given to four angels! (Revelation 7:3)

Please review the following verses so you can thoughtfully consider the two questions that follow: **"After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the Earth, holding back the four winds of the Earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels *who had been given power to harm the land and the sea*: 'Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees *until* we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.' Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel."** (Revelation 7:1-4 Italics mine)

**Question #1:** Why do we need to know about this delay?

**Question #2:** Will the sealing of the 144,000 be determined by character or by timing? In other words, will Jesus wait for 144,000 people to become sanctified and "pure in heart" before He seals them or will Jesus wait for the appointed time to arrive to select 144,000 people and seal them?

### **Question #1 Examined**

The delay in Revelation 7 is foretold because the final generation needs to know that God's wrath is overdue *before* it is released. This fact helps us understand the events recorded in Revelation 8:3-5. In other words, God's patience with sin and sinners expires *before* the 144,000 are sealed. This is why the four angels are empowered and sent to Earth, but told to wait until He has sealed the 144,000. The phrase, "the four winds of Earth," is a word picture of global destruction and upheaval. The release of the four winds (coming from the north, east, west and south) implies powerful, but unseen forces that will chaotically scatter and sweep away all that the human race has built. Consider the following brief scenario which will be presented in greater detail in the next chapter of this book:

The Bible says there are seven angels that stand before God. (Revelation 8:2) These exalted angels are ready to carry out any command that proceeds from the throne. I understand that these seven angels were given seven trumpets in the Spring of 1994 because Earth's cup of iniquity became full at that time. Four of the seven angels have been sent to Earth to harm this planet because God's patience with Earth has ended. Before the angels could harm the land, sea and trees, Jesus restrained them with a command. The Lord put these four angels on hold until His 144,000 servants are sealed. Again, the last generation needs to know that **God's wrath is overdue** and Jesus has put global destruction on hold until the time comes for 144,000 servants to be sealed. Please examine Chart 11.1.

**The Matrix Aligns Revelation 6:7-9, Revelation 7:1-8, Revelation 8:2-7**

Chart 11.1

Time	1994	Today	?	Great Tribulation – 1,335 Days					Second Coming
First Four Trumpets					XXXX				6,000 Years of Sin Ends
Global Earthquake				X					
Angels Given Seven Trumpets	X	— Waiting —							
Four Winds Released				X					
144,000 Sealed			X	The Time of Wrath					
Fourth Seal				X					

Years ago, I heard Evangelist Billy Graham make a comment that went something like this, "If God does not do something soon about the degeneracy of the United States, He will owe Sodom and Gomorrah an apology." Dr. Graham was right. The only reason that Jesus has not done something about Earth's degeneracy is *timing*. Jesus imposed a short delay in Revelation 7:3 and the inhabitants of Earth have been living on borrowed time since 1994.

**Question #2 Examined**

Will the sealing of the 144,000 be determined by character or by timing? In other words, has Jesus been waiting for 144,000 people to become sinless so that they can be sealed, or is Jesus waiting for the appointed time to arrive to select and seal 144,000 people?

The answer to Question #2 is timing. Jesus is waiting for the appointed time to arrive before selecting and sealing 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes. (Revelation 7:4) Contrary to what some denominations teach, Jesus is not waiting on 144,000 people to become sinless so they can be sealed. If Jesus was waiting for 144,000 people to become sinless, a person could argue the Great Tribulation will never start because a sinner cannot become sinless. A sinner may go for a period of time without sinning, but this does not make him sinless! *Once a sinner, forever a sinner!* This is why Adam and Eve had to be cast out of the Garden of Eden. Because we have carnal natures, we are sinful within. We cannot remove our carnal natures. At best, we can subdue our carnal desires through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 7-8), and millions of people have experienced victory over their carnal natures for centuries. Jesus could have sealed 144,000 people centuries ago if He had wanted, because at any given time there are enough people on Earth who love the Lord with all their hearts, minds, and souls, to accomplish all the Lord wants to do. Remember how Elijah thought that he *alone* had been faithful to the Lord during Israel's apostasy and the Lord politely informed the beleaguered prophet that He had seven thousand people in Israel who had not worshiped Baal? (1 Kings 19:18)

We have already noticed that when the sealing occurs, each tribe in Israel will be larger than 12,000 people. In other words, when the time comes for sealing, Jesus will have more than 12,000 people in each tribe from which to choose! This proves that Jesus is not waiting on 144,000 people to become sinless. At the appointed time, He will choose the best from each tribe (as firstfruits) to be His servants. These loyal servants will answer His call and endure the trials and tribulations of being His prophets.

Bottom line: Jesus is waiting for the *appointed time* of the end to arrive (Daniel 8:19); the time set by the Father. (Acts 1:7) When we approach the day that is 1,335 days from the end of the sixth millennium of sin, the 144,000 will be selected and sealed. Then, the delay imposed in Revelation 7:3 will end – right on time. God's judgments will begin on time. Jesus is waiting on the "Grand-Father's" clock to chime and when it does, He will declare the delay is over (Revelation 10:6) and the four winds of His wrath will be released. Before we leave Question #2, please consider the following points:

**Parallels to Consider**

According to Rule One of apocalyptic prophecy, each apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning point and ending point in time. The sealing of the 144,000 in Revelation 7:1-8:1 follows Rule One. For centuries, Bible students have asked, **when** does Revelation 7:1-4 occur? Please examine these two texts and notice that in each case, four angels are involved (bold text and insertions mine):

**Revelation 7:1** “After this I saw **four angels** standing at the four corners of the Earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree.”

**Revelation 9:14,15** “It [the voice from the Altar of Incense] said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release **the four angels** who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’ And the four angels who had been kept ready for **this very hour and day and month and year** were released to kill a third of mankind.”

These texts identify two groups of angels. The first text (Revelation 7) describes four angels sent from God’s throne to harm Earth. The second text (Revelation 9) describes four angels (actually four fallen angels, e.g., demons) who will be let out of the abyss during the fifth trumpet. During the sixth trumpet, the four demons in the second text will be released at a *specific hour* to kill a third of mankind. (Review the bold faced words in the text.) Since the four demons in Revelation 9 are held back until the appointed hour, day, month and year arrives, the four angels in Revelation 7 are waiting for an *exact hour, day, month and year* to do their work. With God, timing is everything.

God’s four angels and Lucifer’s four angels will be allowed to kill the *same number* of people during the Great Tribulation. Look at the math: After the fourth seal is broken, 25% of Earth’s population will die. In round numbers, currently Earth’s population is about six billion people. Twenty-five percent of Earth’s population would be 1.5 billion people. So, Earth’s population will be reduced to 4.5 billion people by the destruction of the first four trumpets. When the sixth trumpet sounds (890 days later), one-third of mankind will be killed by Lucifer’s four angels. One third of 4.5 billion people is another 1.5 billion people! The net result is that both groups of angels kill the *same number* of people. This balance is not a mere coincidence. God has deliberately and purposefully determined the properties of the Great Tribulation.

God has predetermined that the battle for the hearts and souls of mankind will be a “fair fight.” If the devil was given complete control of

Earth, he would destroy the whole world in a single day. Therefore, the devil will be restrained at each step of the way because God insists that the survivors must remain free to exercise their power of choice. The Great Tribulation will be a powerful vortex that will force the living into *choosing* whom they will honor and obey. This is why worship will surface as the all important issue during the Great Tribulation. When the people of Earth see the overwhelming death and destruction caused by God's wrath, the topic of worship will become highly important, because worship will be viewed as the prerequisite means to appease God so that His anger will cease. Desperate circumstances will force the survivors into making a tough decision about whom they will obey. The consequences either way will be very difficult. This vortex explains why the Great Tribulation is called, "a time of wrath." (Daniel 8:19; 11:36; Revelation 15:1)

It is interesting to discover that during the Great Tribulation, whatever Jesus is allowed to do, the devil is allowed to do. Jesus will have 144,000 *servants* speaking for Him and the devil will have thousands of religious and political authorities speaking for him. Evil can neither conquer good, nor can good destroy evil *until* Jesus arrives. Jesus wants the people of Earth to make an informed and intelligent decision as to whom they will obey. (Matthew 24:14) This is why He seals 144,000 prophets *before* the Great Tribulation begins. The world will hear the testimony of Jesus through the mouths of His servants the prophets.

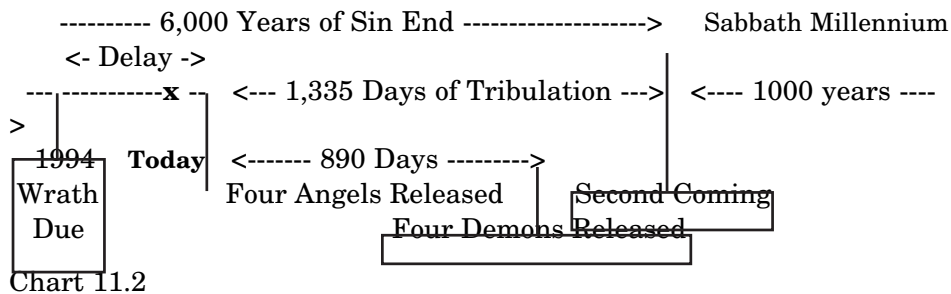
When we study the fifth trumpet in the next chapter, we will see another incredible balance: At the end of the 1,335 days (Daniel 12:12) allotted for the Great Tribulation, Jesus will physically appear in clouds of glory to gather up His children. To be fair, 890 days into the Great Tribulation, the devil will be granted the privilege of appearing in clouds of glory. He will masquerade as Jesus, pretending to establish a kingdom of peace on Earth for 1,000 years! (Revelation 9:1-11) These matters are introduced at this point because you need to be aware that the forces for good and for evil will remain "balanced" until all people on Earth have exercised their power of choice. When the last person on Earth makes his decision, Jesus will declare this verdict, **"Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy. Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."** (Revelation 22:11, 12)

### The Delay Terminated



I believe the Sabbath millennium described in Revelation 20 will begin on time because God's Sabbaths are never early or late. When Earth reaches a day that is 1,335 days from the end of the sixth thousand years of sin, the Great Tribulation will begin. At this time, no one knows precisely where the sixth thousandth year is, but we cannot be very far from it.

### Counting 1,335 Days Backward from 6,000<sup>th</sup> Year



When the appointed day arrives, the four angels in Revelation 7:1-4 will be released to do their harm. This release is described in Revelation 10. **“Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to Heaven. And He swore by Him who lives for ever and ever, who created the Heavens and all that is in them, the Earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, ‘There will be no more delay!’ ”** (Revelation 10:5, 6) Just before the delay is terminated, Jesus will seal 144,000 servants. Then, He will announce the end of the delay in a thunderous voice. (In fact, this announcement will be the first of seven thunders which the 144,000 will hear and understand. See John 12:28-30.)

Jesus imposed a delay in Revelation 7:3 and Jesus will terminate the delay when He declares **“There will be no more delay!”** Until Jesus grants permission, the four angels cannot harm Earth. After Jesus declares there will be no more delay, no one will be able to turn the hands of God's clock back or stop the arrival of His oncoming judgments. God's wrath is overdue, but the 1,335 days necessary to conclude the 6,000<sup>th</sup> year have not arrived. Please examine Chart 11.3 and notice the vertical alignment of three prophecies.

Revelation's Matrix Grows

	1798	1844	1994	Today	Great Tribulation	1,000 Years	White Throne
Prophecy #3 Six Trumpets					x1234 5 6		
Prophecy #2 144,000			A	Waiting	1,335 Days	B	C
Prophecy #1 Six Seals	1 2	3			4 5 6		

Chart 11.3

**Prophecy #1 Revelation 4:1-6:17: The worthiness of Jesus and the six seals**

- 1<sup>st</sup> seal = Salvation through faith in Jesus alone
- 2<sup>nd</sup> seal = Translation and distribution of the Bible
- 3<sup>rd</sup> seal = The judgment bar of Christ begins
- 4<sup>th</sup> seal = Great Tribulation begins
- 5<sup>th</sup> seal = Martyrdom of prophets and saints
- 6<sup>th</sup> seal = Second Coming

**Prophecy #2 Revelation 7:1-8:1: The 144,000, the numberless multitude, the seventh seal**

- A** = Four angels of God given power to harm Earth
- Waiting** = Currently we are waiting for the arrival of the appointed day to seal the 144,000
- B** = The numberless multitude standing around the throne after the Second Coming
- C** = Seventh seal broken at the end of the millennium

**Prophecy #3 Revelation 8:2-9:21: The six trumpets**

- x = Global Earthquake
- 1<sup>st</sup> trumpet = Fiery hailstorms
- 2<sup>nd</sup> trumpet = Asteroid impact on an ocean
- 3<sup>rd</sup> trumpet = Asteroid impact on a continent
- 4<sup>th</sup> trumpet = Ring of Fire erupts – volcano ejecta causes darkness
- 5<sup>th</sup> trumpet = Lucifer appears
- 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet = Lucifer's four angels kill one-third of mankind

**Specification # 3 – The Sealing**

We will examine three specifications of the 144,000 in this segment. First, the 144,000 will be presented to the Father and the Lamb as firstfruits of Earth's harvest. (Revelation 14:4) Second, the 144,000 will not be defiled by women. (Revelation 14:4) Third, the 144,000 will be the first ever to receive the seal of God. (Revelation 7:3) With these three specifications in mind, let us take a look.

No one has yet received the "seal of God" described in Revelation 7, because the 144,000 will be the *first* to receive it. Two statements in the book of Revelation highlight this point. First, the four angels are told to hold back the four winds of the Great Tribulation until the 144,000 are sealed. (Revelation 7:3) In other words, when 144,000 people have been sealed, the fourth seal will be broken and the Great Tribulation will begin! Second, Revelation 14:4 says the 144,000 will be presented to God and the Lamb as firstfruits of Earth's harvest. Because the 144,000 will be the firstfruits of Earth's harvest, and because God's wrath is not released until they are sealed, they have to be the first people ever to receive the seal of God. The seal of God and the sealing of the 144,000 is an "iceberg" topic – one third of it is above surface and two-thirds are below the surface. With this in mind, let us dive under the surface and examine some controversial issues.

**The Judgment of the Living**

In Chapter 4 of this book, we examined the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 and the cleansing of Heaven's temple. In Chapter 10 we examined the relationship between the third seal and 1844. We have already touched on the essential doctrines of "soul sleep" and God's use of "parallel temples." A synthesis of these matters indicates that the judgment bar of Christ began in the Spring of 1844. At that time, Jesus began reviewing the records of the dead which had been "sealed" by death. Because man's power of choice is terminated at death, death permanently "seals" the life's record of those who die. This is why Hebrews 4:7 says, "**... Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.**"

Unlike the *sealed* records of the dead, the judgment of the living presents an interesting challenge. How can Jesus pass eternal judgment on a person who still has the power of choice and the freedom to change his mind? At the risk of being repetitive, here is a short response to this question. One day I was discussing this subject with some friends when one of them said, "Since God already knows our hearts, why does He not judge us on the basis of what He knows about us? If He judged us this

way, there would be no need for testing the people of Earth with torment and persecution during the Great Tribulation.” I responded, “Suppose Jesus were to do as you have suggested. Suppose at the judgment you discover that you are standing among the wicked, outside the holy city. When you realize that you are about to perish by fire, you cry out to the Lord saying, ‘Lord, I did not do anything to deserve burning in hell!’ The Lord responds, ‘My child, I know you did nothing to deserve this, but I knew that you would have if given the chance.’” Then I asked, “Do you want to be judged on the basis of *your* choices or do you want to be judged on the basis of God’s *foreknowledge*?” After a few smiles, the story surrounding the book sealed with seven seals suddenly made a lot of sense.

#### **Four Purposes for Seals**

In Bible times, seals were used for four purposes. (If possible, look up the following references.) Seals have been used to certify the authenticity of a document or transaction. (Esther 8:8, Jeremiah 32:10) Seals were used to prevent tampering or change. (Daniel 6:17; Matthew 27:65, 66) Seals were used to show approval and ownership. (John 6:27; 2 Corinthians 1:22) Last, seals were used as locks to secure property or secrets. (Daniel 12:4; Revelation 5:1) When the Bible speaks of sealing the 144,000, all four uses will apply! Notice how the sequence unfolds:

The *first* people to stand before the judgment bar of Jesus *while alive* will be the 144,000. They will be selected *from* the twelve tribes of Israel and they will be tested, judged, *mysteriously* transformed, and securely “sealed” with sinless natures just before the four winds are released. The “seal of God” on the foreheads of the 144,000 means, (a) they have been tested and judged, (b) their carnal natures have been removed, (c) they are free of any attraction to sin, and (d) they are bond servants of the Father and the Lamb. We will examine this four-step process in a moment. For now, we need to understand why the 144,000 are called “firstfruits.”

#### **Firstfruits of the Harvest**

The word “firstfruits” would speak volumes if you lived in Bible times. Basically, firstfruits were used as a tithe, a gift of 10% or more based on net increase. Presenting firstfruits to the Lord was to be both a gift of appreciation and an adventure in anticipation. God required the offering of firstfruits to challenge the creeping selfishness of man’s carnal heart. By requiring man to “give up” the first and best part of any increase, firstfruits were designed to frustrate man’s relentless preoccupation with acquiring wealth – just as God’s seventh day Sabbath was designed to

frustrate man's insatiable need for more time to do all that he wants to do. Even more, this gift was designed to develop faith in God through anticipation. Notice how this was supposed to work: If a farmer was about to harvest a wheat crop, he was to search through his field and select the finest stalks that matured *first* and present them to the high priest at the temple. The gift of firstfruits was to be given with gratitude for God's sustaining providence and the gift was supposed to represent a tithe of what the farmer *hoped* his new crop would produce. In other words, God designed the giving of firstfruits to be a remarkable experience, not a regular tax. Firstfruits included the first increase from wool, animals, crops and money – any type of increase.

The word "firstfruits" offers several object lessons. The quantity of firstfruits indicated the amount of increase "hoped for." When Paul wrote, **"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."** (Hebrews 11:1), Paul may have used the anticipation that went with gathering firstfruits to frame his remarks. A few verses later, he wrote, **"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."** (Hebrews 11:6) Faith really defines the practice of giving firstfruits to God. The difference between paying a tax and giving firstfruits is gratitude. Tax is a necessary obligation. The giving of firstfruits was supposed to be accompanied with an attitude of gratitude, and embedded in the experience was a financial anticipation. (Unfortunately, Israel did not understand God's purpose for firstfruits and over the years it became regarded as a tax.)

The 144,000 are called firstfruits in Revelation 14:4 for two reasons. **First**, the 144,000 will be the firstfruits of the coming harvest to be sealed. Later on, the individuals who hear their testimony during the Great Tribulation and pass the test of faith will also be sealed as the 144,000 were sealed. **Second**, the 144,000 are called firstfruits because they are a sample of what follows. If barley was presented as a firstfruits offering, the harvest that followed would, of course, be barley. The 144,000 and the numberless multitude that come after them will be identical in composition. These matters will prove to be extremely important when we examine the Jewish heritage of the 144,000 and the great multitude in Specification #8. One last comment – when the firstfruits were presented to the High Priest, they became his property. The parallel is that when the 144,000 are presented to God and Jesus, our High Priest, they will belong to the Father and the Son. As a result, they will be highly exalted and they will follow the Lamb wherever He goes throughout eternity.

### Jewish Virgins?

**“These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure . . .”** (Revelation 14:4) Many people read these words and conclude the 144,000 will be sexually pure. Of course, they will be sexually pure, but so will everyone else who enters into the holy city! **“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.”** (Revelation 21:8, italics mine)

Some people read the phrase, “[they] **did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure**” and conclude the 144,000 will be male virgins. Are women inherently defiling? Of course not! The Bible says the sexual experience between a man and woman within the confines of marriage is neither defiling nor immoral. (Genesis 1:28; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Hebrews 13:4) Other people say the 144,000 will be Jewish males that have not been sexually immoral with women. Look again! This text does not imply the 144,000 will be males! Women can defile themselves with women! (Compare Leviticus 18:22 with Romans 1:26.) Certain groups of Christians interpret this verse to mean the 144,000 will be members of *their* particular church – which, they believe, is the only church on Earth possessing the truth about God. This conclusion is based on a faulty understanding of the harlot’s identity in Revelation 17:5. The Bible says, **“This title was written on her [the harlot’s] forehead: Mystery Babylon the Great the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth.”** (insertion and italics mine) Several Protestant churches believe (or used to believe) the Roman Catholic Church is the great harlot of Revelation. As such, this makes the Catholic Church “the mother of prostitutes,” that is, the mother of apostate Protestantism. Of course, the irony of this view is that advocates are convinced their church is not a daughter of “the harlot.” Therefore, they conclude the 144,000 must originate from within their church, which they believe is the only *remaining true* church on Earth! As you can see, this view is completely consistent with the egocentric nature of man’s religion. Every religious system claims to know God best. The arrogance and ignorance of religion is difficult to measure.

Beneath the surface, there is a much deeper meaning to the phrase, “[they] **did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure.**” This phrase is not about sexual immorality; but rather, it is a phrase describing the devotion of the 144,000 to serve the Lord. Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy says that we should examine parallel language in the Bible to determine the intended meaning of this

phrase. In so doing, we will find *this specification to be a superlative statement about the devotion of the 144,000 to the Lord*. With this thought in mind, please consider a few words about God’s original purpose and mission for the twelve tribes of Israel.

### God’s Purpose and Mission for the Twelve Tribes

When the Lord called Israel out of Egypt, He said, **“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. . . .”** (Exodus 19:4-6, italics mine) A priest is someone God has appointed to stand between God and man. (Hebrews 5:1) Israel was to be a kingdom of priests showing fallen man the love and ways of God. This was God’s plan for Israel, but His plan never got off the ground. Seven hundred years after Israel left Egypt, the Lord pleaded with Israel, **“I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. [If you will love me and obey me, I will not destroy you.] I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind [to truth], to free captives from prison [of sin] and to release from the dungeon those who sit in [spiritual] darkness.”** (Isaiah 42:6, 7, insertions mine) These words fell on deaf ears and about a hundred years later, God exiled Israel to Babylon for apostasy. Seven hundred years after the exile, the apostle Paul elegantly summarized God’s original purpose for the twelve tribes when he said: **“For this is what the Lord has commanded us [the twelve tribes of Israel]: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the Earth.’”** (Acts 13:47, insertion mine) We can see from these texts that God’s plan for Israel did not materialize, and we know from Revelation 7 that 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes will yet accomplish God’s purpose and mission.

Now that we have briefly reviewed God’s purpose and mission for the twelve tribes of Israel, we should be able to understand God’s *motive and intent* when He declared the following law<sup>1</sup>: **“Do not intermarry with**

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 6 indicates the flood in Noah’s day was brought about because of intermarriage. The Bible says, **“The sons of God [those faithful to God] saw that the daughters of [carnal and agnostic] men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.”** (Genesis 6:2, insertions mine) Ironically, the consequences of verse 2 necessitated the destruction described in verse 7.



them [the inhabitants of Canaan]. **Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, *for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.***" (Deuteronomy 7:3, 4, insertion and italics mine) God declared this law just before the twelve tribes entered the promised land. Bible history confirms that Israel essentially ignored this law from the start. Everyone who knows anything about the Old Testament has heard about Samson's love for Delilah who was a Philistine, and King Solomon is widely known as "the man" who had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Notice this text: **"King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter – Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, 'You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.' Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and *his wives led him astray.*"** (1 Kings 11:1-3, italics mine)

Foreign wives led Solomon astray, and in turn, King Solomon led Israel into apostasy. Consequently, it became impossible for God to produce a nation of priests because His people had no interest in accomplishing His objectives. Israel had abandoned God's agenda to satisfy its own agenda. About 200 years after Solomon died, God destroyed the ten northern tribes of Israel, and 100 years after that, He exiled the remaining two tribes to Babylon. Ironically, God's wrath against the nation did not terminate Israel's intermarriage with foreigners. During the seventy years of Babylonian captivity, Jewish captives continued to intermarry.

God forbade intermarriage, because He foreknew intermarriage with foreigners guaranteed Israel's departure from the purpose and mission for which they had been chosen. Notice how God's law against intermarriage has two sides: From God's perspective, His law would protect Israel from the wayward influence of husbands and wives who wanted to serve other gods. From Israel's perspective, the law was a detriment to the pursuit of happiness because it restricted dating and marriage. Who can reason with two young people in love that they should not marry because there is a law against it? The parents of Samson tried to reason with him, but they could not overcome his affection (or should I say, affliction) for Delilah. In short, this is the dilemma of the carnal nature. *God's laws are based on a comprehensive*

*understanding of good and evil and His exalted purposes for us. Our rebellion against God is caused by a heart that is grossly selfish, and our failure to understand the grand purposes for which we were created.*

In the first month of the Jubilee year of 457 B.C., Ezra, a trusted officer in King Artaxerxes' court, a priest of Israel and a teacher of the Law of the God of Heaven, asked the king to issue a decree permitting him to travel to Jerusalem and finish the reconstruction of the city and the temple. Ezra was devoted to God's service and he eagerly wanted to see his people fulfill God's will. After a lengthy trip, Ezra arrived in Jerusalem and he was overwhelmed with the indifferent attitude of the people toward God and the degenerate condition of Israel. After surveying the situation for himself, Ezra called for the leaders. **"After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, 'The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness.' When I heard this, I [Ezra] tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled."** (Ezra 9:1-3, insertion mine)

**"Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, 'We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel. Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord [Ezra] and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law. . . .' Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, 'You have been unfaithful; you have married foreign women, adding to Israel's guilt. Now make confession to the Lord, the God of your fathers, and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives.' The whole assembly responded with a loud voice: 'You are right! We must do as you say.' "** (Ezra 10:2, 3; 10-12, insertion mine)

Now that we have reviewed God's law about intermarriage, Israel's history of apostasy and Ezra's solution to intermarriage, we are in a good position to understand the meaning of the phrase, **"they did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure."** In

summary, the 144,000 will not be corrupted by marriage and they will not fall into apostasy because of their families. The 144,000 will successfully fulfill God's assignment. They will not be deterred by marital conflicts or familial rejection. They will not be compromised. They will fulfill the calling, mission and purpose for which God ordains them. Perhaps the following A/B parallels will clarify this matter:

- A. When the time came to resume temple services in Ezra's day, the priests had a choice of abandoning their foreign wives and children if they wanted to serve the Lord. As you might expect, this was very painful.
- B. When the call comes to be a servant of the Lord God during the Great Tribulation, the 144,000 will have a choice to abandon their unbelieving families to serve the Lord. This will be very painful.
- A. Corporately speaking, Israel never did become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," "a light to the Gentiles," or "preachers of salvation" because the leaders of Israel married foreign women who insisted on worshiping idols and offering sacrifices to other gods.
- B. As a group, the 144,000 will be scattered all over the world. Many of them will be married and their spouses may or may not love the Lord as they do. The phrase, "they did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure" means their spouses will not compromise the 144,000. Their devotion to God will be pure. The 144,000 will, like Abraham, be willing to slay their only son if God were to command it. This kind of devotion to God is *uncommon*. This is why the Bible exalts the 144,000 saying, "they kept themselves pure – as in pure devotion." If necessary, the 144,000 will abandon their families to serve God – and we can be sure that many of the 144,000 will be abandoned by their families for this reason. Jesus said, **"A man's enemies will be the members of his own household. Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."** (Matthew 10:36, 37)
- A. In ancient times, a man could voluntarily "bind" himself to his king by becoming a eunuch. (Isaiah 56:3) This rather severe and irreversible procedure arose for two practical reasons: First, the service of eunuchs was desirable to kings because eunuchs were not encumbered with wives and familial relationships that could interfere with their work. Eunuchs were at the disposal of their king at all times and they often held positions of significant authority.

(Acts 8:27) Second, kings knew that eunuchs could not produce an heir to their throne. Therefore, kings trusted eunuchs to oversee the most contentious and dangerous part of their kingdom, their harem. (Esther 2:3) Young men counted it an honor and a great privilege to give up their “right of manhood” if they could be adopted as “barren” sons of the king.

- B.** As firstfruits of the harvest, the 144,000 will become the property of Jesus our High Priest. In this sense, a person could say the 144,000 will be bound like eunuchs to King Jesus. The 144,000 will form a personal entourage that will attend Jesus wherever He goes. (Revelation 14:4) The 144,000 will be highly honored throughout eternity because, like their father Abraham, they exalted the call of God above everything else.

Remember, the subject of the 144,000 is an “iceberg” topic. On the surface, the phrase says the 144,000 will not be defiled by women, however, beneath the surface, there is a lot more to this phrase than avoiding sexual immorality. God’s 144,000 servants, (both men and women according to Joel 2), will be severely tested. Abraham was severely tested to see if he loved Isaac more than God. (Genesis 22:2; Hebrews 11:17) Moses was severely tested to see if he would be willing to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. (Hebrews 11:24, 25) Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were severely tested to see whether they would obey God. (Daniel 3:16-18) Daniel was severely tested to see if he would continue to pray to God. (Daniel 6:10) Job was severely tested to see if his faith in God was nonnegotiable. (Job 23:10) Jesus was severely tested in the wilderness by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11) and He was tempted in every way as we are. (Hebrews 4:15) The 144,000 will be severely tested to see if their love for Jesus will endure humiliation and the scorn of rejection. Once they pass their fiery test, they will be *mysteriously* transformed within. This mysterious transformation requires some explanation.

### **The Mystery of God**

**“But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.”** (Revelation 10:7)

What is the mystery of God mentioned in Revelation 10:7? We know that it will be completed at the seventh trumpet, but when does it start? The mystery of God is the sealing and it begins with the 144,000 because “judgment begins at the house of God.” (1 Peter 4:17) The mystery of God will be a *mysterious* transformation that cannot be seen, but the

results will be seen. During the judgment of the living, the carnal nature will be removed from everyone who receives Jesus as their Savior and passes the test of faith. The 144,000 will be the first people to experience this amazing transformation. After they have been severely tested and transformed, God will place His seal on their foreheads indicating a secure and permanent transaction has occurred. Remember the four uses of seals in the Bible? The seal of God on the 144,000 indicates a *finished* transformation, a secured position. The 144,000 will be delivered from the attraction of sin. The sinless and bold behavior of the 144,000 will reflect this stunning transformation. They will speak the truth without regard to consequences. The Bible says, **“No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless!”** (Revelation 14:5) This is why the mystery of God (the transformation of man’s nature) cannot be seen, but the results will be seen and heard.

Consider the following scenario: Because the 144,000 are declared “firstfruits,” the judgment of the living will begin with the 144,000. After they are tested and judged, their carnal nature will be *mysteriously* and *miraculously* removed. Then, the 144,000 will be “sealed” with sinless natures – having no propensity or attraction toward rebellion against God. In fact, they will have a distinct repulsiveness toward sin. The 144,000 will be the first to receive what Adam and Eve lost when they sinned. The good news is that each person who receives the testimony of the 144,000 and passes the test of faith will also experience “the transforming mystery of God” and receive the seal of God!

After each person is sealed, the struggle with the carnal nature will be over! Sin will be repulsive and unnatural. Paul knew this transition was coming, even though he did not know exactly when. He wrote, **“. . .The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the [whole] house of Israel [the ten tribes that lived in the north] and with the house of Judah [the two tribes that lived in the south]. It will not be like the [bilateral] covenant I made with their forefathers [in Exodus 19] when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because [of their carnal hearts] they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from [rejected] them, declares the Lord. This is the [everlasting] covenant I will make with the house [twelve tribes] of Israel after that time [the years allotted for the duration of sin], declares the Lord. I will [transform their hearts and minds and] put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts [so there will be no rebellion toward me within their body]. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a**

**man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all [personally] know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. By calling this covenant ‘new,’ He [God] has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.”** (Hebrews 8:8-13, insertions mine)

### **Demonstration and Proclamation**

The gospel of Jesus is more than words. The gospel of Jesus is a way of life and love. Jesus will use 144,000 servants to “show and tell” the world what He wants. From the human perspective, we will look at the 144,000 as bold people at first. These ordinary people will prove to be anything but ordinary after they begin their ministry. Their testimony and actions will be awesome because they will be transformed by God’s power. All the money in the world will not be able to buy the seal of God. Jesus will personally transform and seal one person at a time as they take hold of His promises and pass the test of faith. Jesus is a personal Savior, as well as our Judge, and every soul who embraces His teachings will experience His transforming touch.

The 144,000 will be “perfect” reflections of the love of Jesus. They will be perfect examples of what “Christ in you, the hope of glory” looks like. (Colossians 1:27) Every person who loves truth, regardless of religious background, will observe the humble and loving character of the 144,000. Of course, their truthful speech and blameless lives will offend and infuriate the wicked. Jesus warned His disciples, **“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.”** (John 15:20, 21, italics mine)

We have discussed how the 144,000 will be the first among the living to be judged and mysteriously transformed. We know the 144,000 will be “sealed” a few days *before* the Great Tribulation begins. After they are sealed, the four winds will be released – the judgments of God will begin to fall. Then, 144,000 prophets of God will boldly and fearlessly proclaim the terms and conditions for salvation to a world saturated with ignorance and blinded by religious arrogance. Without regard for the wishes of family members or personal safety, they will speak the Words of Jesus given to them by the Holy Spirit. No lie will be found in their mouths. The testimony of the 144,000 will alienate the religious and political leaders of Earth and all of the wicked. Civil authorities will

severely persecute the 144,000, because their “testimony” will be regarded as “inflammatory speech.” The 144,000 will receive the brunt of persecution and religious hatred, and so will those people who receive their testimony. Nevertheless, the whole world will hear “the testimony of Jesus” through His faithful “servants the prophets” and the end result is that everyone on Earth will be tested. Everyone on Earth will be put through this four step process:

1. Every nation, kindred, tongue and people will **hear** the terms and conditions of salvation through the testimony of the 144,000. Everyone will be informed that Jesus is the Creator and He **commands** respect and worship on His holy day.
2. Revelation 13 indicates the human race will respond to God’s wrath by creating a crisis government that will attempt to appease God by mandating worship. Because the laws and penalties enacted by the crisis government will directly conflict with the laws and penalties of God, everyone will be forced into a difficult choice. The people of Earth will be forced to **make a decision** – submit to Jesus’ authority and suffer Babylon’s persecution or submit to the authority of Babylon and the devil, and receive God’s seven last plagues *and* the loss of eternal life.
3. Everyone will suffer wrath. Those people who obey the laws of God will suffer first. Those who obey the laws of man will suffer greatest, but both groups will suffer. Everyone will be **tested with persecution because** persecution exposes our highest allegiance. If we love our lives more than we love God, persecution will expose this. If we love God more than life, persecution will expose this, too. Jesus said, **“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”** (Matthew 16:25)
4. Everyone who submits to the authority of God and passes the test of faith **will be mysteriously transformed and sealed with the seal of the living God.** All the people who refuse to obey Jesus will have no choice but to **receive the mark of the beast.**

During the Great Tribulation, the gospel of Christ will be proclaimed with clarity and power. Everyone will make an informed and intelligent decision with regard to the gospel. The gospel of Christ demands submission to the King of kings. Many will submit, and twice as many will rebel. In short, the whole world will be put through a time of severe testing. (Revelation 3:10)



### Paul's Comments about the Seal of God

The sealing of the firstfruits (144,000) and the numberless multitude that follows occurs during the appointed time of the end because the sealing “of the living” is the last phase in the judgment bar of Christ. In other words, after a person passes the test of faith, that person will be *mysteriously* transformed and sealed with the seal of God. When the last saint is sealed, “the mystery of God” will be completed – just before the seventh trumpet sounds. (Revelation 10:7)

A certain amount of knowledge existed during New Testament times about the sealing, but it was not experienced or put in its proper context. Paul writes about God's seal and “sealing” in various places and we need to examine Paul's views and comments so that his statements can be prophetically corrected and applied to our day. Before we examine Paul's comments on the seal of God, please review the following texts from the New Testament so that you can appreciate the first century A.D. mind set which Paul and the apostles had with respect to time and timing. (I have underlined certain words to emphasize key points.)

1. The apostle Peter thought he was living at the end of the world. Notice these verses. On the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, Peter stood and said, **“These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.’”** (Acts 2:15-17) **“The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.”** (1 Peter 4:7)
2. The apostle James thought he was living at the end of the world. He wrote, **“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.”** (James 5:7, 8)
3. The apostle John thought he was living at the end of the world. He wrote, **“Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.”** (1 John 2:18)
4. The apostle Paul thought he was living at the end of the world. He wrote, **“What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none.”** (1 Corinthians 7:29)

5. Paul also wrote, **“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”** (Hebrews 1:1, 2) **“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”** (Hebrews 9:24-26, KJV) **“The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”** (Romans 13:12)

After reviewing these texts we find unanimous agreement among the apostles. They believed they were living at the end of the world. History also records that most, if not all of the apostles, had died or been put to death by the time John wrote the book of Revelation. My point is the apostles died without realizing their inaccurate knowledge of God’s timing. None of them knew the Second Coming would be 2,000 years into the future. Paul acknowledged this handicap saying, **“For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.”** (1 Corinthians 13:9, 10)

The subject of the seal of God specifically applies to Paul’s statement, **“For we know in part and we prophesy in part. . . .”** Paul was martyred about thirty years before John wrote the book of Revelation. Paul knew certain things about the mysterious transformation and the sealing, but he did not know its timing. Therefore, Paul applied what he knew about the sealing in his day! In a similar way, after reading the book of Hebrews a person could say that Paul certainly knew about the ministry of Jesus in Heaven’s temple as our High Priest in the Most Holy Place. The problem though, is that Paul did not understand the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14, and he did not know about the time, times and half a time of the little horn power in Daniel 7:25. Simply stated, Paul had no idea that the twenty-first century A.D. would take place. Paul and the apostles understood many parts of God’s plan, but they could not know the timing or arrangement of these parts because the book of Daniel was sealed until the appointed time of the end. (Daniel 12:4, 9)

**A Sealed Judgment**

Consider the following three statements:

1. At the present time, we know the 144,000 have not been sealed because the Great Tribulation has not begun. We also know the 144,000 will be sealed before the saints are sealed because the 144,000 will be the firstfruits of the “end time harvest.”
2. We know that death seals the records of the dead because the dead cannot make any more choices, but the living have the power of choice and opportunities to make choices.
3. A testing time is not only coming, but it is also necessary. Jesus will test the living and seal people who love Him and *choose* to put their faith in Him. The sealing of the saints will occur during the Great Tribulation *after* they have successfully completed the four steps described earlier.

Given these three prophetic matters and Paul’s ignorance of them, we have to put Paul’s comments on the sealing within the context of what he believed. The same holds true with Peter on the day of Pentecost; we have to overlook some of Peter’s statements about timing. Please examine the following texts (I have inserted some phrases in brackets and emphasized key words with boldface type):

1. “Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are **the seal** [as in a validating seal – similar to the seal of a Notary Public] of my apostleship in the Lord.”  
(I Corinthians 9:2, insertion mine)
2. “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom **you were sealed** [marked as the property of Christ] **for the day of redemption.**”  
(Ephesians 4:29, 30)
3. “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set **his seal of ownership** on us, and put **his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.** I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you [from rebuke] that I did not return to Corinth.”  
(2 Corinthians 1:21-23, insertions mine)
4. “And you [Gentiles] also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed,

you **were marked in him with a seal** [indicating ownership], the promised Holy Spirit, **who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption** of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:13, 14)

5. "To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of **this mystery, which** [no other religion offers] **is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**" (Colossians 1:27)
6. "In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. **This mystery is that through the gospel** [of Jesus Christ] **the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel**, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 3:4-6)

These six texts were written by the same man who wrote, **"What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none."** (1 Corinthians 7:29)

These texts are presented to demonstrate that Paul could not have used the concept of sealing in his day as it should be understood in Revelation 7. Paul died thirty years before John wrote the book of Revelation.

However, Paul knew something about the seal of God and the mysterious transformation that was "near" for the saints. Notice what he wrote about A.D. 63, **"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. . . . By calling this covenant 'new,' he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear."**

(Hebrews 8:10-13, italics mine) *If we take into account Paul's mind set and if we synthesize all that Paul wrote on the seal of God, his comments make sense even though they are not to be confused with the sealing of the 144,000 in Revelation 7.*

If we selectively use Paul's comments to support a view that conflicts with Revelation 7, the Bible appears to be internally contradictory. The apostle Peter noticed that some people were using Paul's writings in a harmful way, so he wrote, **"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in**

**all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people *distort*, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”** (2 Peter 3:15, 16, italics mine)

Because we know that Paul’s writings are easy to distort, I have presented several texts to reflect the sum of Paul’s comments on the sealing. With these texts in mind, let us look more closely at Paul’s message.

### **“The Deposit” of the Holy Spirit**

Jesus knew, from His own experience, that His disciples could not make headway against the ignorance and arrogance of Judaism without a manifestation of divine power, because it is not possible for one man to prove the superiority of his religion over that of another. Religion usually narrows thinking to a point where reasoning is not possible. Jesus also knew that if His disciples were left on their own to “grow His church,” they would succumb to discouragement because laboring for the conversion of others is hard work. Furthermore, there was a great deal of antagonism against Christianity within Judaism and this conflict made it almost impossible to have insightful discussions. Jesus knew that His ministry, teachings and church would evaporate if left to human prowess. So, **“On one occasion** [near the time of His ascension], **while He was eating with them, He gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. . . .’ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth.”** (Acts 1:4, 8, insertion mine)

The promised power arrived a few days later. On Sunday morning, April 21, A.D. 30, at the Feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit arrived *at just the right moment* for several reasons. The Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem was a required assembly for the Jews. (Exodus 23:17) Because the Jews had been scattered into every part of the world by Kings Shalmaneser V and Nebuchadnezzar in the eighth and sixth centuries B.C. respectively, the Feast of Pentecost was attended by Jews from all nations and they spoke many diverse languages. Jesus had been absent from Earth for ten days when this feast occurred and the disciples were certain that His return would be imminent. In fact, we have already observed in this segment that all of the apostles anticipated the end of the world and the establishment of the Kingdom of God “at any time.” (Matthew 3:1, 2; Acts 1:6)

Jesus sent a display of divine power through the Holy Spirit at the Feast

of Pentecost that morning to (a) awe the worshipers with Holy Spirit power, (b) to open the minds of the Jews to hear the testimony of His disciples, and (c) to validate the claims of the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. (This was necessary because of the lies which Jewish leaders had paid soldiers to spread throughout Jerusalem. Matthew 28:13-15). To make the testimony of the apostles really remarkable, Jesus gave His disciples the ability to fluently speak in the foreign languages of those present. (Acts 2:8) Jews from all parts of the world would be able to hear the gospel of Jesus in their own language while they were witnessing tongues of fire and a great noise that sounded like roaring wind. (Acts 2:2, 3)

The Holy Spirit was present and authoritative among members of the Christian Way until Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. Miracles were performed and the Church grew rapidly. The *deposit* of Holy Spirit power validated the teachings of the disciples. Consider these twelve notable events in the first ten chapters of Acts!

1. Through the Spirit, Peter and John healed a beggar who had been crippled from birth. (Acts 3)
2. Peter, made bold by the power of the Holy Spirit, spoke forcibly. (Acts 4)
3. Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, were slain by the Spirit for lying to Peter. (Acts 5)
4. The apostles were released from jail during the night by an angel. (Acts 5)
5. Seven deacons were chosen under the direction of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 6)
6. The deacon Stephen performed great signs and wonders. (Acts 6)
7. Stephen was martyred as his face shone with glory! (Acts 7)
8. Philip performed signs and wonders. (Acts 8)
9. Peter and John went to Samaria. The Holy Spirit was poured out on believers. (Acts 8)
10. Philip was mysteriously transported to baptize the Ethiopian eunuch. (Acts 8)
11. Saul was converted. God used a believer named Ananias to miraculously restore Saul's eyesight. (Acts 9)
12. Cornelius was given a vision. Peter was given a vision. Peter was sent to the home of the Gentile, Cornelius. The Holy Spirit

was poured out on Gentile believers. (Acts 10)

These twelve events (and I am sure there were hundreds more, but not recorded in the Bible) are highlighted to show that the early Christian movement succeeded because the Holy Spirit was active. Without the powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit, the Christian movement would have died during the first century A.D. because religious cultures are opposed to change.

### **Christianity Possessed “The Seal of Approval”**

Paul, himself, became a convert to Christianity through a miraculous conversion. His physical eyesight was restored by a miracle (Acts 9:17) and his spiritual eyesight was corrected by visions from God! (Galatians 1:17, 18) Because the manifestations of the Spirit were frequent and genuine and because the early church was convinced that Jesus would soon return, early Christians interpreted the presence of the Holy Spirit among them as God’s seal of approval. The gift of the Holy Spirit made Christianity the true religion on Earth. This is why Paul explained the seal of God as he did. The receipt of Holy Spirit power was the seal (or endorsement) of God, and he was right. Paul’s view of the sealing perfectly aligns with the thoughts of the other apostles.

With this information in mind, review these two verses:

1. “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set **his seal of ownership** on us, and put **his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come**. I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you [from rebuke] that I did not return to Corinth.” (2 Corinthians 1:21-23, bolding and insertions mine)
2. “And you [Gentiles] also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you **were marked in him with a seal**, the promised Holy Spirit, **who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption** of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:13, 14, bolding and insertions mine)

The problem with these texts is that some Christians read the verses *today* and they apply Paul’s first century A.D. comments to our present time. For example, some Pentecostals believe that every person who genuinely receives Christ will be able to demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous way, such as speaking in an unknown tongue, healing a sick person, handling a poisonous snake or drinking



poison. These things are thought to “validate” one’s rebirth and the receipt of the Holy Ghost. (Mark 16:17, 18)

This view of Mark 16:17, 18 is a distortion of the purpose and mission of the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit power was poured out on early Christians between A.D. 30 and A.D. 70 for the purpose of “jump starting” the early Christian Church into existence. After Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, the manifestations of the Holy Spirit began to dissipate because the Christian Church had become established. It had grown to the point that it could prosper through the influence and regeneration which the Holy Spirit typically works in the hearts of people. Of course, the Holy Spirit is at work today, but not in the powerful and dramatic ways recorded in the book of Acts. This does not lessen the work of the Holy Spirit! Twenty-seven percent of the world’s population claim to be Christian because the Holy Spirit is at work! Moreover, an amazing parallel is just around the corner! The power of the Spirit witnessed during the first century A.D. will be witnessed during the last century A.D., but for a different purpose. Please consider this:

Holy Spirit power will be poured out on *all flesh* during the Great Tribulation. The 144,000 will be sealed and the Great Tribulation will begin. For 1,260 days, God’s servants will proclaim the Word of God with great power and authority. Signs and wonders will accompany their testimony as in the days of the apostles. (Acts 14:3) Millions of people will receive Christ because of the Spirit enabled and Spirit empowered work of the 144,000. As people submit to the terms and conditions of salvation and pass the test of faith, they will be sealed just like the 144,000 were sealed. The *mystery of God*, the mysterious removal of the carnal nature, will end just before the seventh trumpet sounds. The problem is that Paul thought he was living at the end of time, during the time of the sealing, but he was incorrect. The first people to be sealed will be the 144,000 and their sealing will come soon.

### Summary

The 144,000 are called firstfruits in Revelation 14:4 because they will be the first to be sealed. After they are sealed, a great harvest, a numberless multitude will follow them. The numberless multitude will be sealed *during* the seven trumpets of the Great Tribulation. The Bible also says the 144,000 will not be defiled by women. This means they will be “married” to their calling, to the service of Jesus, and His call will separate them from their families. They will not be compromised or distracted by familial relations. The 144,000 will be severely tested *before* they are sealed. The Bible does not indicate how they will be

tested, but we can be sure that Jesus will test His servants with the same fiery processes that He has used down through the ages. Because we know something about the life and death tests facing the saints during the Great Tribulation, we can be sure that Jesus will appropriately test the 144,000 for the challenges they will face on His behalf. At just the right time in Earth's history, Jesus will select 12,000 people from each of the twelve tribes and these "servants" will faithfully respond.

Earlier in this segment, we learned that seals were used in four different ways in ancient times. Notice how these uses apply to the sealing that is coming:

1. Seals were used in ancient times to certify the authenticity of a document or transaction. (Esther 8:8, Jeremiah 32:10) The seal of God will certify the authenticity of the 144,000 as His servants.
2. Seals were used in ancient times to prevent tampering or change. (Daniel 6:17; Matthew 27:65, 66) After they are sealed, the 144,000 and the saints will be secure from the attraction of the carnal nature.
3. Seals were used in ancient times to show approval and ownership. (John 6:27; 2 Corinthians 1:22) The power of the Holy Spirit will rest on the 144,000 and this power will confirm they are God's prophets.
4. Seals were used as locks in ancient times to secure property or secrets. (Daniel 12:4; Revelation 5:1) After the carnal nature is removed and God's people are restored to the pre-fall condition of Adam and Eve, the seal of God will secure their sinless nature.

Hopefully, you have an idea of how all four uses of seals will apply to God's people during the end time!

#### **Specification #4**

Three important distinctions between the 144,000 and the *numberless* multitude that many people overlook are outlined in verses 9-17.

1. The 144,000 are *numbered* and the *numberless* multitude cannot be counted. This feature indicates there will be two distinct groups of people living during the end time, a small group of prophets and a large group of saints. (We have already examined John's distinction between prophets and saints in specification #1.)

2. The Bible indicates the 144,000 will be the firstfruits of the harvest. The Bible also indicates the 144,000 will be God's "servants the prophets" during the Great Tribulation. The Bible says the numberless multitude in Revelation 7 will consist of people who came out of the Great Tribulation. Notice this end time specification: **"Then one of the elders asked me, 'These in white robes – who are they, and where did they come from?' I answered, 'Sir, you know.' And he said, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"** (Revelation 7:13, 14, italics mine) Since the numberless multitude in Revelation 7 is an end time group of saints (and not a group of saints from all ages) and since the numberless multitude will come from all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, they have to be the end time harvest, because the 144,000 are the firstfruits of this harvest.
3. The third rule of apocalyptic prophecy does not allow the number 144,000 to be symbolic. Rule Three requires the Bible to define the meaning of a symbol if a prophetic element is thought to be symbolic. In other words, if the number, 144,000, is a symbolic number, the Bible has to define the meaning of the symbol. We cannot make up our own meanings to symbols. There are no symbolic numbers in the Bible. God does not use one number to represent another number. Numbers can be used in analogous ways (Psalm 91:7), and numbers can be translated according to the Jubilee calendar (Rule Four of apocalyptic prophecy), but numbers themselves are *always* literal. Consider the math in this case: 12,000 people are sealed from each of the twelve tribes and this produces a literal total of 144,000 people.

### After the Second Coming

The following verses describe a wonderful scene that occurs *after* the Second Coming. John saw a numberless multitude of saints, who came out of the Great Tribulation, standing before the throne of God. Please review the following verses from the KJV (I have inserted some clarifying text in brackets and italicized a few words for emphasis):

**"After this [the sealing of the 144,000] I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of *all* nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, *stood before the throne*, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation [belongs] to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb [for**

we are unworthy of this great reward].’ **And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, Saying, Amen: [Yes!, everything belongs to God and the Lamb] Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.”**

**“And one of the [24] elders answered, saying unto me, ‘What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?’ And I said unto him, ‘Sir, thou knowest.’ And he said to me, ‘These are they which came out of [the] *Great Tribulation*, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.’ ”**

**“[Because these particular saints experienced hunger and thirst during the Great Tribulation,] They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away [their memories of suffering and] all tears from their eyes.” (Revelation 7:9-17, KJV)**

### **Summary**

In keeping with the distinction between saints and prophets, Revelation 7 describes two groups of people who will live during the Great Tribulation. The prophets are numbered and the saints are numberless. A numberless multitude will be saved out of all nations and cultures during the Great Tribulation. The 144,000 will be sealed first (before the Great Tribulation begins) and the saints that receive their testimony will be sealed during the Great Tribulation.

### **Specification #5**

This specification is not often discussed, because it is poorly understood. The Bible indicates that the 144,000 will experience and successfully endure the sufferings of Christ. The highest honor that God can bestow on the followers of Jesus is to allow us to experience the sufferings of Christ. This concept may sound strange at first, so please consider the nature and purpose of Christ’s suffering for us. Paul wrote, **“In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of**

**their salvation *perfect* through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are [members] of the *same* family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.**” (Hebrews 2:10, 11, insertion and italics mine)

The word “fellowship” is defined as two or more people having the *same* experience or said in the vernacular, two or more people “in the same boat.” When we suffer for Jesus, we enter into fellowship with Jesus. He becomes our brother in suffering and we become connected to Jesus in an intimate way that words cannot adequately express. There is no stronger bond than brotherhood through suffering. Men and women who have not been on the battlefield find it hard to understand or appreciate the brotherhood that develops among warriors. You have to experience it to understand it. It is a very powerful thing, and I have seen it with my own eyes.

Amazingly, people from different backgrounds and different cultures can be thrown together in an infantry unit during a war, and over the course of time, they become “one” in purpose, plan and action. Of course, they recognize each other’s strengths and weaknesses and they know each other’s faults, but these things do not matter because a powerful bond of *love* springs up. When men become willing to lay down their life for each other, a union forms that cannot be broken. This is a phenomenon that, if experienced, is never forgotten. Though separated by thousands of miles and decades without communication, comrades never forget the sacrifices made by their brothers. I have seen many veterans reduced to tears when interviewed about their war experiences. This emotion involuntarily rises because through the deepest bonds of love, they are forever connected to their “brothers in battle.” This brotherhood, forged in the heat of battle, partially explains the great love that existed between David and Jonathan. (1 Samuel 18:3)

The brotherhood of suffering with Jesus is presented in this segment because the 144,000 will form a powerful bond of love for Jesus through their suffering for Christ. We have already learned they will be called on to give up their closest human ties, as necessary, to serve the Lord. As prophets of God, the 144,000 will face the wrath of the devil and his demons, not to mention persecution and torture by wicked people who hate the ways of God. Jesus said, **“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”** (Matthew 10:37-39)

Because of their steadfast devotion to Jesus, the 144,000 will lose everything they own – their family, their possessions, their respect in their community, and like the apostle Paul, their self-worth, to glorify Jesus. In the heat of battle, they will become “one” with Jesus in purpose, plan and action. This is why the 144,000 will serve as “priests” throughout ages to come. They will fearlessly go to their death for the cause of Christ when necessary. Because of their devotion and fidelity to Jesus, the 144,000 will be honored above the rest of the redeemed. No one else, not even the twelve apostles, will be able to sing their song.

**“And they 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.”**

(Revelation 14:3) Because they will share in the sufferings of Jesus, the 144,000 will be closest to Jesus. They will literally wear the names of the Father and the Lamb in their foreheads (signifying their exalted position) and they will attend Jesus wherever He goes. (Revelation 14:4)

### **Two Levels of Suffering**

Jesus suffered on two levels for our salvation. First, in the physical dimension, Jesus was treated with contempt; He was mocked, denied justice, flogged and crucified. Ironically, Jesus died on the cross because of man’s hatred and God’s love. Men hated Jesus because they could not tolerate the truth about God, so they “attempted” to murder Jesus on the cross. On the other hand, God loved the world so much that He was willing to give us Jesus as an atonement for sin. Jesus did not die at the hands of men, even though that was their intent. The Father took the life of the Son after Jesus gave it to Him. (Luke 23:46) Never in the Bible is Jesus called the “Lamb of man.” Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb of God. The Father provided the Lamb for our salvation and the Father took the life which the Lamb willingly gave up. The Son of God died at and in the hands of the Father. This truth was powerfully demonstrated when Abraham was required to offer the love of his life, Isaac, on Mount Moriah. (Genesis 22:2)

### **Deeper Level**

The second level of Jesus’ suffering is more difficult to explain. Jesus suffered within His soul to the point that He would have died in the Garden of Gethsemane if an angel had not strengthened Him. The Bible says His perspiration was like great drops of blood. (Luke 22:43, 44) Of course, the prospect of death on a cross was part of Jesus’ anguish in the garden, but Roman history tells us that thousands of people were hung on crosses in that era. Therefore, Christ’s anguish concerning the cross was similar to the anguish which the two thieves must have felt. Jesus

broke into a sweat like blood and would have died in the garden because He was made deathly ill by the presence and power of sin. **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Please consider this text: **“During the days of Jesus’ life on Earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once *made perfect*, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”** (Hebrews 5:7-9) Twice in the book of Hebrews, Paul indicates that Jesus was “made perfect” through suffering! The Greek word for perfect, *teleioo*, means mature, completed or finished. Of course, Jesus was perfect having no sin or rebellion from birth. He never sinned! (Hebrews 4:15) So, how could Jesus be “made perfect” through suffering?

Suffering is a powerful force that drives a human being into rebellion or submission. I would venture that many of the people in prison today are there because of suffering that began in childhood. The carnal nature hates suffering. Suffering produces anger and anger predisposes people to rebel against authority in general and humanity in particular. On the other hand, pain has been used for centuries to force people into submission. Since wicked people are not interested in a system of justice, torture is their best tool because it is a powerful force that drives a human being toward submission. A sinless Jesus was born into “a world of suffering” so He could demonstrate the importance of being perfected through *patient* suffering. We cannot totally appreciate the sufferings of Christ at the deeper level because our carnal nature has not been removed, but this will change.

Sin was grossly offensive to Christ’s sinless nature. Patiently living among sinners and dealing with the selfishness, blindness and arrogance of the human heart was very hard – even for Jesus. However, Jesus was made perfect *in patience* through suffering. He faced the tenacious power and degenerate influence of sin every day. Jesus learned how to receive grace from God as it was needed each day, and this is how suffering perfected His patience. Patience is how Abraham and Sarah failed when they decided Abraham should have a son by Hagar. Patience is how Moses failed when he killed the Egyptian. He had to spend forty years herding sheep in the wilderness before God could use him. Patience is how Moses failed when he struck the rock twice and God



refused to let Moses enter the promised land. Patience is the hardest thing on Earth to perfect! Through faith in God and patience in suffering, Jesus overcame the world. The plan of salvation was perfectly “worked out” because Jesus patiently submitted to the Father’s will each day.

James wrote, **“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete [perfect], not lacking anything.”** (James 1:2-4, insertion mine) The 144,000 will suffer physically, emotionally and spiritually because of the presence and power of sin. They will suffer most because (a) they will be the first to be sealed, and (b) they will have an overwhelming task to accomplish. Because they will have sinless natures, it will be painful for them to deal with the power and presence of sin. The irony is that God’s prophets will love sinners, but they will hate the bondage of sin which controls their listeners! *The challenge of the 144,000 during the Great Tribulation will be to lead people to suffer Babylon’s wrath for Christ’s sake, so that the carnal nature can be removed!* Their burden for souls, their frustration with the power of sin, and their love for Jesus and sinners will cause deep anguish within the 144,000. They will agonize, as Jesus did in Gethsemane, for strength to fulfill God’s will. Like the shepherd looking for that one lost sheep, the 144,000 will exhaust every physical and emotional fiber in their being to find one last soul so that person can be saved from the jaws of sin.

### Summary

John indicates that many, if not all, of the 144,000 will be killed “because of the Word of God and the testimony they maintained.” We also know that millions of saints will be killed during the Great Tribulation because of their faithfulness to Jesus. This is why Jesus said, **“If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.”** (Revelation 13:10) This text epitomizes Jesus’ experience: patience and faithfulness. Because the 144,000 will faithfully endure the sufferings of Jesus with success, no other person will be able to sing their song. **“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”** (Revelation 14:12, KJV)

### Specification #6

The sixth specification concerning the 144,000 is that no lie or falsehood will be found in their mouths. (Revelation 14:5) Again, the topic of the 144,000 is like an iceberg – one third of this topic is above the water line and two-thirds are below. This particular specification goes far below the water line. Consider this text: **“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.”** (Revelation 21:8) This verse indicates that *no* liar will enter the kingdom of Heaven. In this sense, the 144,000 will be no different than anyone else going to Heaven! So, how does Revelation 14:5 exalt the accomplishments of the 144,000 when it says, **“No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.”**?

After the 144,000 are sealed, the Great Tribulation will begin with a global earthquake. God’s prophets will be empowered to speak and they will present the demands of the sovereign Jesus to the people of Earth. Now, it is one thing to get angry and to “let loose” in the heat of the moment, but it is quite another to have to stand before hostile groups of people and tell them things they do not want to hear – day after day! The 144,000 will polarize the people of Earth with their speech. People who love truth will follow their lead. People who hate truth will produce every reason why the 144,000 should be silenced. The 144,000 will fearlessly declare the Word of God regardless of personal consequences. Because they will not take up arms to fight and because they will not run from their post, their brazen actions will be stunning and relentless.

When the Pharisees and Sadducees went out in the desert to see John the Baptist, pretending to be interested in his revival message, John quickly detected their hypocrisy and deceit. They were not interested in his message, they were spies sent from the temple. The Bible says, **“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees 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.’ ”** (Matthew 3:7, 8) No doubt, those Pharisees and Sadducees were embarrassed, but they could not do anything about his remarks because they were outnumbered. John the Baptist was to the first advent what the 144,000 will be to the second advent. The 144,000 will not blunt the double edged sword of truth by compromising their message. The Great Tribulation will not be a time for soft peddling the gospel. That day will be a valley of decision for multitudes. The 144,000 will cry out, **“... Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”** (Matthew 3:3)

Hopefully, a picture is forming in your mind and heart. The Bible exalts the integrity and honesty of the 144,000 saying, **“No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless,”** because they will be faithful spokespersons. They will deliver the testimony of Jesus without concern for their safety. They will proclaim the terms and conditions of salvation and their message will not be compromised or varnished. They will openly call sin by its right name and the Holy Spirit will work signs and wonders through them, confirming their divine message. Looking forward at their fiery assignment, these words in Revelation 22 will be particularly potent because there will be many who will reject or attempt to deflect their testimony. **“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”** (Revelation 22:18, 19)

#### **Specification #7**

The Bible says the 144,000 will visibly wear the names of the Father and Son on their foreheads after they are taken to Heaven. (Revelation 14:1; Revelation 22:3, 4) John does not indicate the names of the Father and Son are written on crowns which are worn on their foreheads, although that might be possible. I prefer to view John’s comments as though the 144,000 will have the signatures of the Father and the Lamb, as medals of honor, literally written on their foreheads. The names of the Father and Son will indicate their high rank in God’s government throughout eternity. Notice these two texts:

1. **“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.”** (Revelation 14:1)
2. **“No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.”** (Revelation 22:3, 4)

There are levels of authority in Heaven. For example, there are seven powerful angels that stand before God. (Revelation 8:2) We know that Gabriel is a highly exalted angel and he stands in God’s presence. (Luke 1:19) We know that Lucifer was anointed as a guardian cherub and he wore beautiful stones signifying his high rank. (Ezekiel 28:13, 14) The 144,000 will also be highly exalted after they are taken to Heaven.

Their exalted position will be noticed every time we look on their faces.

We have a similar way of exalting authority on Earth. Military officers have worn their rank on their foreheads (hats and helmets) for centuries. Field grade officers in the United States military are distinguished above lower grades by the gold webbing that is located on the brims of their hats. This gold webbing is designed to be visible at a distance because a field grade officer merits a higher level of attention and respect from his subordinates.

Many Christians tend to overlook the importance of the names of the Father and Son written on the foreheads of the 144,000. This specification is highly important because there is an evil parallel. The Bible indicates the devil will establish his kingdom on Earth during the sixth trumpet. After killing one-third of mankind, he will require his loyal survivors to wear a mark. Ordinary people will wear a tattoo showing “666” on their right hand, but the “exalted” leaders of Lucifer’s government will wear the devil’s name tattooed on their foreheads! Notice this text: **“He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on *his right hand or on his forehead*, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is *the name of the beast or the number of his name*. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man’s number. His number is 666.”** (Revelation 13:16-18, italics mine) The mark of the beast is both a number or a name. The mark of the beast is worn on the right hand or on the forehead. The parallel is obvious. Satan will counterfeit the 144,000 with 144,000 of his own servants. The counterfeits will wear the devil’s name tattooed on their forehead. Of course, the 144,000 will not wear the signatures of the Father and Son on their foreheads before they go to Heaven, but they will be highly exalted after they get to Heaven for declaring the truth about the devil and his deceptions under most distressing circumstances. Throughout eternity, the saints will see the 144,000 and each time we see them, we will remember their total devotion and sacrifices for the calling of Jesus.

### Specification #8

**Note:** If, out of curiosity, you have jumped over the other specifications to read this one first, I hope you will be sure to read the other seven specifications in their order because there is a progressive order to this presentation on the 144,000.

The Bible clearly indicates that the 144,000 will be Jews, coming from the twelve tribes of Israel. Revelation 7:5-8 says, **“From the tribe of**

**Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.”**

Understandably, these verses give some people the idea that the 144,000 will come from the “Jewish race.” Before we examine this issue, we need to look at three texts. There is an important difference between being a member of the Jewish race and being a Jew.

1. **“A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God.”**  
(Romans 2:28, 29)
2. **“In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together *of one body*, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”**  
(Ephesians 3:4-6, italics mine)
3. **“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed [Greek: sperma], and heirs according to the promise.”**  
(Galatians 3:29, insertion mine)

With these texts in mind, please consider the following ten paragraphs:

1. God called Abraham to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and travel to a land that He would give to Abraham and his descendants. (Genesis 12) When Abraham arrived in the land, God made an unconditional promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land for generations to come. (Genesis 13:15; 15:18-21) Centuries later, God honored His promise and gave the land of Canaan to the twelve tribes of Israel at the time of the Exodus. (Exodus 12)
2. While in the wilderness, God informed Israel that even though they would possess the land of Canaan, *it would not belong to them*. (Leviticus 25:23) They were granted the privilege of living

in the land for as long as they obeyed the Lord. If they chose to rebel against the Lord, He promised to evict them from the land. (Leviticus 18:28; 26:33, 34) Knowing they would eventually be evicted from the land, God also promised to restore them to the land of Canaan if they would repent of their sins while in exile. (Leviticus 26:40-42)

3. Over the course of centuries, Israel repeatedly rebelled against God. (Ezekiel 23) In fact, Israel defiantly refused to fulfill the purpose for which God had separated them from all other nations! (Exodus 19) So, God had the ten tribes in the northern part of the country evicted by Shalmaneser V in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17) and the two tribes in the southern part of the country were evicted by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. (2 Kings 24)
4. Near the end of the seventy years in Babylonian captivity, the prophet Daniel confessed the sins of his people and he asked God to fulfill the words of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11, 12) by restoring the nation of Israel to its homeland. (Daniel 9:1-23) God heard Daniel's prayer and responded according to the provisions stated in His covenant. (Leviticus 26:40-42) God granted Israel a measure of time, seventy weeks, to "straighten up" and prepare for the appearing of Messiah. (Daniel 9:24) The decree that marked the beginning of the Seventy Weeks, issued by the Persian King, Artaxerxes, was in the Jubilee year of 457 B.C. (Ezra 7)
5. According to the prophecy in Daniel 9, Jesus arrived on time. He was baptized at the beginning of the seventieth week (A.D. 27) and He died in the middle of the seventieth week, the Wednesday year of A.D. 30. Because Israel had fallen into defiant apostasy *again*, they rejected and crucified the Messiah. (Luke 23, Acts 3)
6. Because Israel rejected Messiah, God put a new plan in place. I call this new covenant, "Plan B." "Plan B" was made better than "Plan A" for several reasons. (Hebrews 8:6) For one, God redefined Israel under "Plan B" to consist of *everyone* who received Jesus as Lord and Master. (John 1:12; 3:16; 13:13, KJV)
7. The disciples heard Jesus annul God's covenant with biological Israel (Matthew 23:37-39) and they heard Jesus implement a new covenant that was based on submission to the authority of Jesus – as opposed to the authority of Moses. (Luke 22:20) In essence, the followers of Jesus received "the trusteeship of preaching the gospel" that once belonged to the Jews. (Acts 13)
8. After the outpouring of Holy Spirit power at the Feast of

Pentecost (Acts 2), early Christians came to understand that a “new Israel” had been raised to replace “old Israel.” The new Israel consisted of believers in Christ. In fact, the apostle James called early Christians, “the twelve tribes of Israel.” **“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. . . . My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, do not show favoritism.”** (James 1:1, 2:1)

9. God revealed to Peter and the apostle Paul that in His sight, there is neither Jew nor Gentile anymore. However, His unconditional covenant to Abraham still remains, and everyone who receives Christ as his or her Savior will be counted as the offspring of Abraham. (Galatians 3 and 4; Ephesians 2 and 3) God also made it clear that in His sight, a Jew (a chosen person) is not determined by biological birth or physical circumcision. (Romans 2:28, 29; Romans 9:6) Instead, the twelve tribes consist of people who have faith in God and a circumcised heart (Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 2:29), as did Abraham their father (John 8:39). The bottom line is that the only people going to Heaven are those who lived as Abraham did – by faith! Thus, all Israel will be saved in the end because Israel consists of believers! (Romans 11:26) **Because believers in Christ have been “grafted in” to the promises made to Abraham, God’s promise will be fulfilled.** (Romans 10 and 11)
10. After Earth is purified by fire at the end of the thousand years (Revelation 20), the Holy City will descend to Earth. (Revelation 21) It is so large that it will encompass the whole land of Canaan! (Revelation 21:16) The Promised Land will be located inside the Holy City! When the Holy City descends, two wonderful promises will be fulfilled. The heirs of Abraham will inherit the undefiled land of Canaan forever (**“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth”** Matthew 5:5) and Abraham will actually live within the city that he longed to see: **“For he [Abraham] was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”** (Hebrews 11:10)

The bottom line is this: The 144,000 will be descendants of Abraham! But, the 144,000 will not necessarily be members of the Jewish race. The 144,000 will come from every race of people! Furthermore, the Bible says the numberless multitude that go through the Great Tribulation will come from **all** nations, kindreds, tongues and people. God promised



Abraham that he would be the father of *many* nations and Revelation 7 affirms this! Because the numberless multitude will be multinational, the firstfruits of the same harvest (the 144,000) will be multinational. Remember, firstfruits are a sample of the coming harvest!

### Summary

There is no question that the 144,000 will come from the twelve tribes of Israel. The problem that many Christians do not understand is the identity of Israel. The New Testament teaches that God *redefined* Israel at the end of the seventieth week when it became evident that Israel would not accept His Son and fulfill their calling as a holy nation of priests. When the seventy weeks expired, the apostle Paul was converted (A.D. 34). Through the revelations God gave him, we have confirmation of this truth. Many Bible writers point to the redefinition of Israel. God made several unconditional covenants with Abraham, and He will keep them. Israel's rejection of Messiah has not thwarted God; instead, it has made Him more determined to gloriously fulfill everything He promised. Therefore, everyone who puts faith in Jesus is declared Abraham's seed, and as such, we become heirs to the promise!

### Closing Statements

We have examined eight specifications about the 144,000. I have presented the following conclusions:

1. The 144,000 will be men and women. They will be spokespeople for God during the Great Tribulation.
2. The Great Tribulation will begin immediately after they are selected and sealed.
3. The 144,000 will be the first to have their carnal natures *mysteriously* removed. Their devotion to Jesus will not be compromised by family relations.
4. As firstfruits, the 144,000 are numbered. They are set apart from the *numberless* multitude, the end time harvest, which is the fruit of their labor.
5. The 144,000 will experience and endure the sufferings of Christ. No one else will be able to sing their song.
6. The 144,000 will not compromise the words that Jesus gives them to speak. They will speak the truth without regard for the consequences.

7. The 144,000 will visibly wear the names of the Father and Son on their foreheads throughout eternity.
8. The 144,000 will be Jews, the seed of Abraham, heirs of the promise through Christ.

### Additional Notes on Chapter 11

Through the years, I have been asked various questions about the 144,000 that you may want to consider.

#### What is the significance of selecting 144,000 people from the twelve tribes?

God made some amazing promises to Abraham because God loved this man of faith. For example, God promised Abraham that through him, all the nations of Earth would be blessed. Jesus came through Abraham's lineage and that blessing is beyond calculation! (Galatians 3:16) On another occasion, God changed Abram's name to Abraham because God ordained that *a childless* Abram should be called, "the father of many nations." **"No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations."** (Genesis 17:5) Abraham will see the fulfillment of his name when the numberless multitude in Revelation 7 gather around the throne of Jesus. I look forward to the day when Jesus will call Abraham to His throne so that with his own eyes, the patriarch can see that indeed, he is the father of many nations! John said, **"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. . . ."** (Revelation 7:9, italics mine)

God told the biological descendants of Abraham that they were to be trustees of the gospel and a nation of priests. (Exodus 19) The apostle Paul and every Pharisee knew this. Paul said, **"For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the Earth.'"** (Acts 13:47) When Israel failed to live up to the terms and conditions of the covenant, God abandoned the biological family of Abraham for a family of people who believed in Messiah. This may sound harsh, but this was not the first time God did this. God destroyed the first generation that came out of Egypt by keeping them in the wilderness for forty years so that another group of people could enter the promised land. God destroyed the city of Jerusalem through Nebuchadnezzar so that He could raise another group of

people. Later on, God destroyed Jerusalem again through Titus in A.D. 70 so that He could raise another group of people. The point is that *God keeps destroying the rebellious and raising up another group of people to accomplish His promises.* God raised up the Christian Church and it rebelled just like Israel. God raised up Protestants, and they have rebelled just like Israel. This is why God will select and empower 12,000 individuals from each tribe at the end. He will use a group of people that have nothing in common but a heart of faith. By incorporating the twelve tribes into Revelation 7, God indicates that He is honoring the original promises He made to Abraham! The identity of the twelve tribes is unknown and unseen today. This is not a problem because God knows who His children are. Jesus said, **“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”** (John 10:14-16)

Psychologists say there are four basic personality traits: sanguine, melancholy, choleric and phlegmatic. Each person has a dominant trait and recessive traits. The combinations of traits are said to produce twelve personality groups. Perhaps the redeemed will be grouped according to personality type because each of Jacob’s sons had unique personality characteristics and Jacob blessed his sons accordingly. (See Genesis 49 and 1 Chronicles 4:21, 23.) If the twelve tribes reflect personality types, then God can use *all* twelve personality types to reach the diverse people of Earth because no one personality type is acceptable to everyone.

The Bible says the Holy City, New Jerusalem, has twelve gates and twelve foundations. Each gate bears the name of a tribe and each foundation bears the name of an apostle. (Revelation 21:12, 14) These features are quite revealing. The twelve *foundations* of the Holy City bear the names of the twelve apostles because the gospel of Christ was built on the Rock of Ages by the apostles! The twelve gates into the city are portals named after the twelve tribes because each gate could be an entry point for each personality type. Twelve different groups of firstfruits, 12,000 servants from each tribe, will lead their *kinsmen* through their respective gate to God’s throne! Our family structure in Heaven will be our tribe. Everyone will belong to a tribe! Everyone will belong to a wonderful family!

**Why does God choose 144,000 people and ignore the religious**

**systems of the world?**

This is a good question. Why does God “leapfrog” over the great religious organizations that exist during the end time to use a diverse group of 144,000 people to preach the gospel? If we consider the vast resources that some religious organizations have, it would seem foolish to ignore these agencies during the end time! But, here are six reasons why God cannot use them:

1. The glory of doing the impossible, proclaiming the gospel to the whole world in 1,260 days belongs to God, not man.
2. The seven religious systems of the world are corrupt. They cannot and do not speak for God. They can neither correctly explain the everlasting gospel, nor can they properly explain the plans and purposes of God for the Great Tribulation.
3. Most people agree that God does not save people because of church affiliation. Salvation is not gained through membership in an organization. In fact, if God was going to use a religious organization to proclaim the everlasting gospel during the end time, church affiliation would prove to be an insurmountable problem. Consider the human trait called prejudice. You and I both know that some people would rather die and go to hell than to join another church or even worse, join the church of someone who has offended them. For example, let us suppose that God looked down on Earth and declared a particular sect within the Moslem faith to have the truth for the end time. How many Catholics, Jews and Protestants do you think would join with Moslems in order to be saved? Now turn the table around and ask yourself, how many Catholics, Jews, Protestants and Moslems would join your church?
4. God will not save a person because his biological great-grandfather was Abraham, Job or Daniel. The Lord has made it very clear in the book of Ezekiel that a person’s ancestry has nothing to do with their salvation! (Ezekiel 14:18; 18:4-28; Matthew 3:9) God has no grandchildren. Every child of God has to be born again.
5. A major obstacle that prevents God from using established religions during the end time is that *one man cannot prove the superiority of his religion over that of another*. If history proves anything, this point is proven true beyond question. Do you think that Elijah could have proven that his God was greater than the

god of Baal if God had not sent fire from Heaven? Because religion is inherently arrogant and egocentric, one religious group cannot prove its superiority over another religious group.

6. God knows that religion has far more to do with social structure than with a personal love for truth. (It is said that 95% of the people remain loyal to the religious system into which they were born and raised – even if they do not practice the religion.)

Because the properties of religion are very strong within the human race, because social relationships can be more important than commitment to truth, and because there is a distinction between serving God and serving the church, God will destroy the great religions of the world and test mankind to see if we love Him and His truth above everything else.

The test will be simple and will be applied without partiality. God will require everyone to leave his or her church for the sake of truth! The object of our deepest affection will then be revealed. At that time, some people will discover they loved their church more than they loved God! When a contest exists between “God’s truth” and “God’s church,” then, and only then, can humans detect the distinction that exists between serving God and serving the church. Until this test of loyalty is applied, most people cannot understand the problem. Remember, in Jesus’ day, the Pharisees could not figure out how they could be as blind as Jesus claimed! The same is true today. A time is coming when God’s truth will conflict with the teachings of every church, and everyone will have to make tough choices. We will see that many people cannot separate themselves from their church, even when presented with the plainest evidences of truth.

To help us make up our minds, God will allow the devil to appear on Earth. The devil (the Antichrist) will dissolve all the religions of the world and forcibly create a new global church. This event in itself will help motivate those people who could not leave their church for truth’s sake. On the other hand, people who are cowardly will prostitute their faith and join the newly created church because the devil will establish stringent laws so that everyone who refuses to join his church will be put to death. It is interesting to note in this context that God considers cowardice as great a sin as murder and sexual immorality. **“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.”** (Revelation 21:8)

Before leaving this question, one more comment should be made. Why does God use such a tiny number of people to proclaim the everlasting gospel during the end time? Given the fact that nearly six billion people now live on Earth, it seems that the work would be much easier if He chose one million or ten million people to accomplish his task. In human terms, the 144,000, like Gideon's army, are too few to accomplish the task. By choosing such a tiny number, God will again demonstrate that He is not dependent on flesh to accomplish His purposes. **“... ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.”** (Zechariah 4:6) Even the stones could cry out if necessary. (Luke 19:40)

**Do you think the twelve stars in the woman's crown represents the twelve tribes?**

Yes! In Revelation 12, the story of the true church (represented by a righteous woman who is pregnant) and a great red dragon is told. The woman wears a crown of twelve stars on her head. From the Greek language, we learn that these stars are set in a *stephanos*, that is, a crown of victory. According to Revelation 1:20, stars can symbolize messengers or angels and by applying the words of Daniel 12:3 to the woman's crown of twelve stars we find a very beautiful fit. **“Those who are wise (or teachers) will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever.”** In other words, the woman wears a crown of victory. This crown is set with twelve stars. The twelve stars represent the 144,000 – firstfruits of the twelve tribes – who will be victorious over the Antichrist.

**How will the 144,000 be notified?**

I presume the 144,000 will be notified just like all of the prophets in the Bible were notified. About the only thing the 144,000 have in common is their encounter with Jesus! Consider this parallel. In Revelation 10, John was given an open book and told to eat it. The book was sweet in his mouth and bitter in his stomach. Then, John was told to prophesy again before kings, nations, etc. Within the context of Revelation 10, John's experience represents that of the 144,000. The book represents God's words which He will give to the 144,000 to proclaim throughout the Earth. He will give the 144,000 words to speak, otherwise, they would not know what to say. (Matthew 10:19) The final proclamation of the gospel will not be a matter of human ability. God will give the words that He wants spoken to the 144,000 and the Holy Spirit will provide the power. (Matthew 10:19)

Consider Ezekiel 2:8-3:4. Like John, God gave Ezekiel a book to eat that was sweet in his mouth and bitter in his stomach. The book Ezekiel received contained the words that God wanted spoken. Ezekiel was told to speak these words to *his* people, whether they listen or not. This is the bitter part in the stomach. Ezekiel had to speak the words of God and this created a lot of ridicule and offense. (This explains why the life span of prophets is usually short.) Of course, the enabling power within Ezekiel was the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit enabled Ezekiel to say (and do) things that were beyond mere human capability. Ezekiel and John were both called to be prophets and they were given words to speak. This will be the experience of the 144,000.

**How will the 144,000 be recognized?**

The 144,000 will be recognized by three means: First, their message will be Bible based. The 144,000 will proclaim the everlasting gospel from the Bible, and as a result, they will find themselves standing in opposition to religious leaders of their day. Second, the 144,000 will be recognized by their humility, simplicity and authority. Remember John the Baptist with his humble dress? (Luke 7:25) People went out to the Jordan River to hear John the Baptist because he spoke with power and authority that came from Heaven! (Luke 7:24-26) People marveled at Jesus because of the authority with which He spoke. (Mark 1:22) Last, the 144,000 will be recognized as “prophets” because they will have the ability to perform signs and miracles. Of course, the servants of the devil will be doing miracles, too. (Exodus 8:18; Matthew 7:20-22)

During the Great Tribulation, many people will put their faith in counterfeit “miracles” because they do not want to submit to the “faith testing” terms and conditions of salvation. If a false prophet can perform a counterfeit miracle on demand (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12), many people will use the “sign” to justify rebellion against God. (Matthew 16:4) On the other hand, if the Holy Spirit knows that a miracle will help an honest person make a decision for truth, then a miracle will be given. Many miracles will occur and they will force people to take sides. This, of course, is how the sheep are separated from the goats.

**How soon do you expect to see the 144,000?**

I believe the great earthquake and the empowerment of the 144,000 could occur any day now. The 144,000 will not show up on TV. They will not receive a round of applause or some glittering reward.



However, when they show up you will know that Jesus has taken control of Earth and the final 1,335 days (of Earth) have begun. The 144,000 will not ride in limousines or have world fame. Paul wrote, **“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.”** (1 Corinthians 1:27)

**Will the 144,000 come from one church group?**

No. God has people in every religious body whose hearts are right, but whose heads are wrong. (John 10:16; Romans 2:14-16) When Jesus knocked Saul off his donkey in Acts 9, Jesus knew that Saul had a good heart, but his head was terribly messed up by his religion. Consider the fact that Saul was persecuting the saints when Jesus called him to take the gospel to the Gentiles. My point is that, like Saul, the 144,000 will come from *all* religions. Many people have good hearts toward God, and after they encounter Jesus and receive the words that He wants them to speak, they will be transformed, just as Saul became Paul!

The net effect is simple. God wants to save as many people as possible. Therefore, God will have Moslem believers talking to their Moslem brothers; Catholic believers will be talking to their Catholic brothers; Hindu believers will be talking to their Hindu brothers, etc. Who is better at proclaiming the gospel of Christ than those who know and understand the obstacles that face their brothers? Do you really think a Moslem would listen to a Protestant? Do you think a Jew would listen to a Baptist? Of course not! The 144,000 will come from every nation, religion, language and tribe and after their encounter with Jesus, they will receive the script and speak His words to their brothers, just like Saul did! This will ultimately produce what Jesus wants, a numberless multitude of saints who come from every nation, kindred, tongue and people!

**Will the 144,000 know each other?**

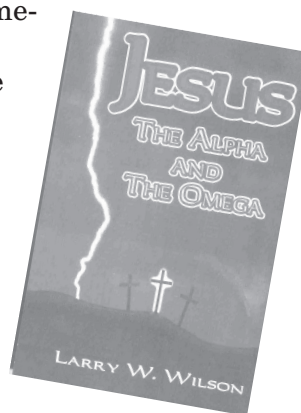
Probably not. The important thing is that no one will be able to say that their message was contrived by man. In other words, what is the possibility that a mere 144,000 people who are spread out over the face of Earth, speaking different languages, belonging to antagonistic religions, and not knowing one another, preach the same message with amazing authority? The chance is zero! This miracle will provide profound proof that their work and calling is divinely ordained. This simple miracle will also confound and offend the religious leaders of Earth.

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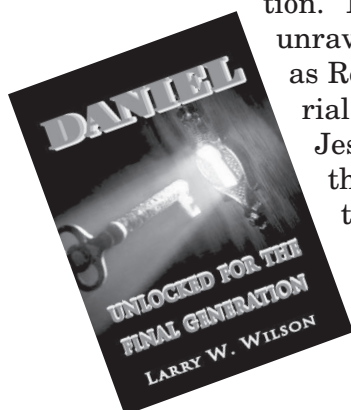
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Larry Wilson, Director of Wake Up America Seminars, became a born again Christian after returning from a tour of duty in Vietnam. The understanding of the gospel, the plan of salvation, and the atonement of Jesus Christ has thrilled his soul for the past 30 years. Since his conversion, he has spent over 25 years intensely studying the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

In 1988, he published the book *Warning! Revelation is about to be fulfilled* and since then, he has written several books (over 800,000 books in circulation throughout the world in more than 60 countries). He gives seminar presentations, produces video programs which have been broadcast from various locations throughout the United States, and is a guest on radio talk shows.

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