

A Study on the
Seven Trumpets,
Two Witnesses,
and Four Beasts

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Attention Readers

I began writing a commentary on Daniel and Revelation in 2001. Because I knew this task would be lengthy, I have published portions of this endeavor when there was enough material to produce a book. My commentary on Daniel was published in June 2003 and the first segment of my commentary on Revelation was published in June 2004. This book represents the next segment on Revelation. If you find this book helpful, I sincerely hope you will read the previous segments because the study of apocalyptic prophecy is additive. In other words, it is a learning process. Valid rules of interpretation have to be understood and tested, and basic concepts have to be grasped before larger concepts will make sense. If you do not have these materials, you can download them for free over the internet at www.wake-up.org . Click on the red button that says “Topical Studies.”

Larry Wilson
May 2009

The Seven Trumpets

“And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.”

– Revelation 8:2

Please consider four introductory points:

- 1. The seven trumpets of Revelation are seven horrible judgments that will impact Earth during the Great Tribulation.** These judgments will devastate the ecosystems of this planet so completely that Earth will not be able to recover. The book of Revelation describes these judgments as “seven trumpets” because a trumpet will sound in Heaven’s temple each time a judgment occurs. The first four trumpets will occur in rapid succession. These four judgments will be so catastrophic that they will sever the past from the future. Life for everyone on Earth will dramatically change once these events begin. Thousands of cities will be destroyed by fire and water. Twenty-five percent of the world’s population will die during the first few weeks, and global infrastructures such as communication, travel, banking, manufacturing, and shipping will all but disappear. God’s judgments will impose great tribulation on everyone. The first four trumpets will cause the whole world to relate to God in a way that is presently unimaginable.
- 2. The “full cup principle” is a prerequisite to the study of the seven trumpets.** The “full cup principle” is a policy that God consistently uses to manage groups of people. A group of people can be cities like Sodom and Gomorrah, a nation like Israel, a world empire like Medo-Persia, or even the whole world, as in Noah’s day. This principle is fairly easy to understand. When the majority of a group becomes so degenerate and defiant that extended mercy has no redeeming effect, God reveals His love for the innocent victims of sin and future generations. He responds to the current generation by sending warnings and redemptive judgments, so that if possible, His wayward subjects will change course. If His warnings are ignored and His **redemptive** judgments do not produce repentance and reformation, God destroys that group by sending totally **destructive** judgments. This principle explains the appearance and disappearance of civilizations. The full cup principle is found

throughout the Bible. For example, God destroyed the world with a flood in Noah's day, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah in Abraham's day, God collapsed the walls of Jericho for Joshua, God destroyed two-thirds of Israel and sent the remainder into Babylonian captivity (605-536 B.C.), and finally, God sent the Romans to destroy Jerusalem in A.D. 70. God will soon apply the "full cup principle" again to the whole world as He did in Noah's day. The seven trumpets will be redemptive judgments (seven first plagues) and then the seven bowls (seven last plagues) will be totally destructive.

- 3. God thoughtfully designed the seven trumpets to accomplish many objectives.** One objective is confrontation. God wants to confront the false religions of the world with "gospel truth." The first four trumpets will set the stage for this confrontation. When billions of people see the sudden destruction of notably wicked places all over Earth and the obliteration of twenty-five percent of the world's population, almost everyone will be found in a state of genuine anguish, fearing the wrath of Almighty God. The first four trumpets will produce unimagineable destruction, and the chaos that will follow will be so great within each nation that each government will question whether it will be able to continue functioning. After the first four trumpets occur, the nations of Earth will realize that mankind is dealing with one angry God. All of Earth's political and religious leaders will humbly unite in an all out effort to appease God so that His wrath will immediately cease. Driven by fear and humbled by overwhelming destruction, the religious and political leaders of the world will implement a terribly misguided solution to appease God's wrath. Unfortunately, their solution will stand in direct opposition to what God actually wants, and the confrontation between man's solution and God's plan will begin.

Another objective embedded in the seven trumpets is redemption. The "shock and awe" of the first four trumpets will shatter religious paradigms. All people, despite religious backgrounds, will listen and intelligently consider a gospel that is different from anything they have ever heard. This receptivity to another paradigm will be miraculous given the religious antagonism that has existed for centuries between Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Atheists, Catholics, Protestants, and Pagans. Today, no one religious body can claim that it knows more about Almighty God without being condemned by the other six. God will displace man's arrogance by uniting

mankind through fear. Overwhelming destruction will produce unimaginable suffering and hardship. God will level the playing field through humiliation so that people will hear His gospel. This will provide an opening wedge that will cause people to listen to God's servants, the 144,000. The 144,000 will boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Thus, every religious and nonreligious nation will hear and thoughtfully consider a gospel which they would have refused to hear at any other time. (Matthew 24:14)

There are other important objectives in the seven trumpets, but these two examples should demonstrate the point that God has thoughtfully planned His forthcoming actions. God is love. He is deliberate and purposeful in all of His actions. It is a shame that God has to implement His full cup principle and destroy a large portion of Earth to get mankind to listen to Him. Yet, the good news is that millions of people in every nation will listen. The Great Tribulation will ultimately produce two distinct groups of people. One group, the sheep, will consist of people with pure hearts who will exalt righteousness and love truth. The other group, the goats, will consist of people who will do anything to save themselves from suffering and death.

Because God is deliberate in everything He does, I call the seven trumpets and seven bowls designer judgments. God's plan for Earth and its inhabitants predates Creation, and His plan will be consummated soon. The Bible teaches "Intelligent Design:" Jesus created this world in six literal days and rested from His creative works on the seventh day. (Genesis 2:1-3) The Bible also teaches "Intelligent Demise:" Jesus will also destroy this creation over a course of 1,335 days. Nothing can stop Him once He starts the process.

4. **Some people believe the book of Revelation was written in chronological order.** Consider these two verses: **"When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets."** (Revelation 8:1,2)

Many people think these two verses are in chronological order. This is not the case. If we approach the book of Revelation with the presupposition that its contents were written in chronological order, we will become hopelessly confused. For reasons that were discussed in the chapter titled, "Getting Started with the Book of

Revelation,” we know the book of Revelation contains twelve prophecies. There is chronological order in Revelation, but this order is found *within each prophecy*. Remember, I use four rules as a basis for my understanding of apocalyptic prophecy. Specifically, Rule One of Apocalyptic Prophecy¹ states: “An apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning and ending point in time and the events occur *in their stated order*.”

If you are not technically inclined, you may wish to skip the following section and return to it after you read the rest of this chapter. I have elected to include this segment early in the story of the seven trumpets because you need to understand that references in more than one apocalyptic prophecy can tie to the same event.

Take a moment to consider Diagram 12.1. Notice that the six seals in Prophecy #1 and the six trumpets in Prophecy #3 are in chronological and numerical order.

Next, look at the three elements within Prophecy #2. The first element is the sealing of the 144,000, and by simple deduction, we know that

Chronological Order within Each Prophecy

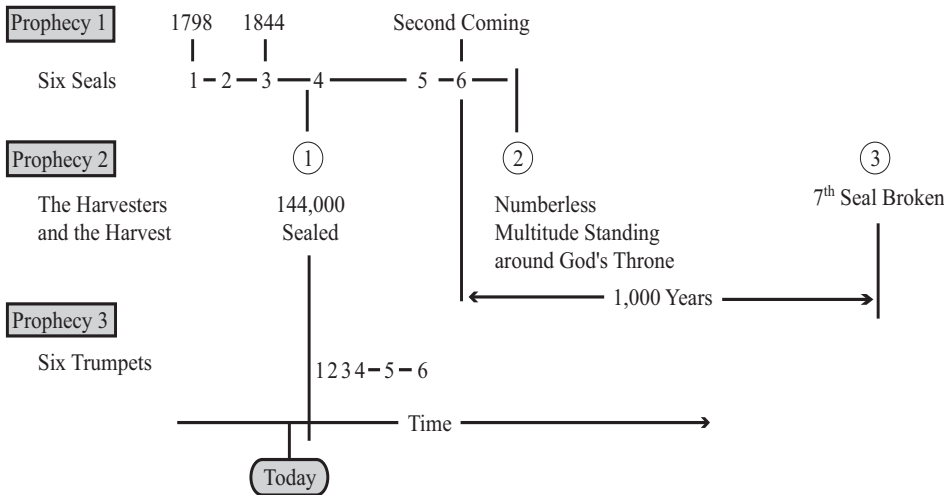


Diagram 12.1 (Not drawn to scale)

¹ If you would like to examine the four rules of interpretation used in this commentary, please review “Notes and Comments on Chapter 1,” pp. 21-30 in my book, *Daniel, Unlocked for the Final Generation*, or you can freely download this chapter at <http://www.wake-up.org/Daniel/DanChap1.htm>.

this sealing occurs *before* Earth is hurt and the Great Tribulation begins. The second element in Prophecy #2 is a scene that takes place in Heaven *after* the Second Coming: An innumerable number of people who went through the Great Tribulation are seen standing around God's throne. Finally, the third element in Prophecy #2 is a numbered element – it is the seventh seal. Carefully notice that the events within Prophecy #2 are in chronological order even though the seventh seal is the only numerical item in this prophecy.

At first, it might seem that the seventh seal in Prophecy #2 is disconnected from the six seals in Prophecy #1. God deliberately put the seventh seal at the end of Prophecy #2 so that we could accurately determine the timing of the seventh seal!

Notice how this works: Obviously, the seventh seal has to occur *after* the sixth seal (the sixth seal is the Second Coming). Then, because there is chronological order in Prophecy #2, we know that the seventh seal occurs *after* the numberless multitude are seen standing around God's throne. This also confirms the seventh seal occurs after the Second Coming. And, according to Revelation 20:12, the *Book of Life* is opened once – at the end of the 1,000 years. From our study on the seven seals, we know that the *Book of Life* is the “book” that was sealed with seven seals. Therefore, the breaking of the seventh seal on the *Book of Life* occurs at the end of the 1,000 years. There is no wiggle room on this conclusion because God put the twelve prophecies together in a very tight matrix. When we use valid rules of interpretation, there is harmony from the sum of all the parts!

The prophecies in both Daniel and Revelation have many elements that occur simultaneously. For example, in Revelation, the breaking of the fourth seal in Prophecy #1 (God's four judgments – sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts) and the sounding of the first trumpet in Prophecy #3 occur at the *same time*. In fact, the seven trumpets cause sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts to occur!

This next point is important, but few Bible students understand it. Rule One of apocalyptic prophecy forces *a new prophecy to begin whenever chronological order is broken*. This concept explains why Revelation 8:2 starts a new prophecy. In other words, the seven trumpets cannot be given to the seven angels *after* the seventh seal is broken and the 1,000 years have ended, even though both events are contained in the first two verses of Revelation 8. Rule One forces Revelation 8:2 to become the starting point of a new prophecy because Revelation 8:2 *does not chronologically follow* Revelation 8:1.

Whenever chronological order is broken, Rule One forces us to declare the ending point of the previous prophecy and the starting point of a new prophecy. It is a challenging, time consuming process to find the twelve prophecies in Revelation, but with God's help, we can identify the twelve prophecies. Blessed is the one who reads and understands the book of Revelation. (Revelation 1:3)

The Bottom Line

If a person does not properly understand the timing, nature, and purpose of the seven trumpets, he cannot understand Revelation's story. Ironically, most Christians do not appreciate the necessity of understanding the seven trumpets for three reasons: First, millions of Christians have been misled by the doctrine of a pretribulation rapture. Because these Christians believe they will not be on Earth during the seven trumpets, they are not especially concerned about them. Their attitude is, "Yes, the seven trumpets are interesting, but not critically important. As long as we are ready for the rapture, we have nothing to worry about." A second group of Christians have also been misled on the seven trumpets. They believe the seven trumpets occurred in the distant past, but interestingly, their attitude is similar to the first group. Their attitude is, "Yes, they are interesting if you are interested in history, but they are not critically important today. As long as we have a good relationship with Jesus, we have nothing to worry about." The last group of Christians scoff at the importance of Bible prophecy. Their attitude is, "Bible Prophecy is a nose of wax that people manipulate according to whim and bias. The Bible can be made to say anything. Bible prophecy has no bearing on my salvation. As long as I have a good relationship with Jesus, there is nothing to worry about." Even though all three Christian views are in opposition to each other, they produce the same attitude, "The seven trumpets are interesting, but they are nothing to worry about."

This indifference reminds me of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. **"The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'"** (Matthew 25:5,6) Christians have gone to sleep, but the first four trumpets will awaken them and many will suddenly discover that they have been deceived. Many will become angry and bitter toward God and whose fault will it be?

Just BEFORE the Seven Trumpets Begin

There is an unusual service that occurs in Heaven just before the seven trumpets begin. Once you understand the significance of this special

service, the judgments that follow will make a great deal of sense. As you investigate the seven trumpets, keep this thought in mind: God is love. This means that God's actions *are eternally consistent* with principles of love. The Father gave us Jesus because He "so loved the world" and Jesus willingly died on the cross because He "so loved the world." God's wrath against evil and degenerate behavior is motivated by His love for righteousness, fairness, and equity. Do not forget the flood in Noah's day. A "God of love" destroyed the *whole* world when a majority of people became hopelessly wicked. (Genesis 6:7) God's love for oncoming generations demanded action.

The full cup principle is based on love, and God's love is expressed through a perfect balance of justice and mercy. God hates to see individuals and nations self-destruct through degeneracy, rebellion, and sexual immorality. (Genesis 13:13) God is patient and longsuffering, not willing that anyone should perish. (2 Peter 3:9) We often forget that God – who sees the past, present, and future with the same clarity – loves oncoming generations just as much as He loves the present generation. Therefore, His love for oncoming generations moves Him to destroy the current generation so that the oncoming generation can be free of the degenerate and destructive behaviors that would be passed down to them. Remember, the sins of the fathers are passed down to the third and fourth generations! (Exodus 20:5)

Over time, sin multiplies, it metastasises like cancer cells. Sin penetrates society quickly and exponentially. Sin is like gravity. It creates a steady downward tug that eventually pulls everyone (especially the innocent and uninformed) into its deadly vortex. A new generation only gets a chance of having a better life when the old order is destroyed. Thus, it becomes necessary for a God of love to destroy degenerate groups of people when they pass the point of no return.

Innocent people sometimes perish when God destroys degenerate groups because God's wrath against a group of wicked people is not necessarily discriminating. For example, many little children were drowned in Noah's flood. Many good people were killed during King Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem. When God's wrath breaks out against a corporate body whose majority is beyond redemption, it is like the indiscriminate destruction caused by an atomic bomb. The loss of innocent life does not prohibit God from doing what needs to be done because (a) God knows that everyone on Earth dies sooner or later anyway, and (b) He has the power to resurrect every dead person. Remember, Jesus will judge each person individually. Jesus will decide each person's case accordingly. So, whether a child died in Noah's flood

or a person dies of illness, a crime, a tragic accident, or during some expression of God's wrath, the cause of death has nothing to do with one's eternal destiny. (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14, 2 Corinthians 5:10)

The Censer Comes Down

The story of the seven trumpets begins with Revelation 8:2. Take a few moments to get acquainted with this segment of the story: **“And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar [of Incense]. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand [and God granted the request of His saints]. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came ^apeals of thunder, ^brumblings, ^cflashes of lightning and ^dan earthquake. Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. [A few days later.] The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came ^ehail and fire mixed with blood [mercy], 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 [including food crops] was burned up.”** (Revelation 8:2-7, insertions mine¹)

Five Physical Phenomena

Five small superscript numbers were inserted into the verses above. Each number identifies a fearful and spectacular event. These five events form a package and this “package of five events” will occur on *three separate occasions* during the Great Tribulation. The first package will occur at the beginning of the seven trumpets. The second package will occur at the end of the seven trumpets (Revelation 11:19) and the final package will occur at the end of the seven bowls (Revelation 16:18-21). The Bible does not say whether these events will transpire over a few hours or a few days. However, according to Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy, we can be sure these five events will be

¹ I have found that one of the best ways to offer Bible commentary is to insert a few words or phrases into those portions of Scripture that are being discussed. This is *not* an attempt to translate nor change Scripture. Rather, it is an attempt to be as direct as possible. This technique often accelerates understanding. Therefore, you will find my words, notes, and phrases throughout this study enclosed in brackets [].

phenomenal! They are designed to bring the world to a halt. Everyone on Earth will be intimidated by these violent and powerful displays of nature. The whole world will witness these violent events *at the same time*.

Even though Revelation 8:5-7 does not explicitly say these five phenomena will be global events, they have to be understood as global events because:

1. The seven trumpets will affect the whole world.
2. The Great Tribulation will affect the whole world.
3. The seven trumpets will terminate world order as we presently know it. The seven trumpets will put the world on notice that Jesus Christ now rules over Earth as *Almighty God*.
4. These five phenomena will occur three times. The third package occurs at the Second Coming, which will be a global event. Since the Second Coming and the seven trumpets are global in nature, I believe it is safe to conclude that all three packages are global. These five events are designed to get worldwide attention at the same time.
5. God's wrath and offer of salvation will be global in nature. The story in the book of Revelation is universal, that is, the story is the same in every nation. Therefore, these five phenomena will occur *in the same way at the same time in every nation*.

Commentary

“And I saw the seven angels who stand before God and to them were given seven trumpets.” (Revelation 8:2)

The story of the seven trumpets begins with a simple statement. John saw seven angels standing before God – actually, Jesus Christ. Earlier, in our study on the seven seals, we found that Jesus ascended the throne as “Lord *God Almighty*” in 1798. (See also Revelation 11:17 where Jesus is called “Lord *God Almighty*.”) The angel’s *standing* posture before God’s throne indicates these particular angels have positions of highest authority. These seven angels are described throughout Revelation in different ways, such as the seven spirits of God, the seven angels of the seven churches, the seven angels who received the seven trumpets, and the seven angels who will eventually

pour out the seven bowls.

The Timing of Revelation 8:2

As a result of my study, I have concluded the seven angels were given the seven trumpets in the spring of 1994. Since this date is not explicitly declared nor predicted in Scripture, some people scoff at the suggestion that 1994 is prophetically important. To be fair, I agree that a certain amount of skepticism¹ is warranted, but the fact remains that the seven angels are given the seven trumpets at some point in time. When I ask people to put a biblically reasoned date-stamp on Revelation 8:2, the responses range from silence to avoidance. Some people have suggested the seven angels were given the seven trumpets at the cross, or when Jesus returned to Heaven, or at the end of the seventy weeks, or at the time of Noah's flood, or 1798, or 1844. Some people have even said, "It does not matter when they received the seven trumpets because if it did matter, God would have told us."

Nothing in Scripture explicitly dates Revelation 8:2. However, for those who would duck the dating of this verse, my response is simple: "There are seventeen prophecies and eighteen prophetic time periods in the books of Daniel and Revelation, and God has not declared a starting date for most of them. This silence does not mean that starting dates are unimportant or that starting dates cannot be determined. In fact, God's silence is an invitation to see if a solution date can be found!

Everyone wanting to date-stamp Revelation 8:2 faces a thorny problem. Here is the problem: The torment of the fifth trumpet lasts five months. (Revelation 9:5) Should these five months be regarded as five literal months or should they be translated (using a day for a year) as 150 years (thirty days per month times five months equals 150 days which translates into 150 years)? This question raises more questions: *If time is translated as a day for a year in apocalyptic prophecies, like the seventy weeks mentioned in Daniel 9:24, when does a day for a year translation begin? Does the day for a year translation ever end? If so, when?*

By God's grace, I believe that I stumbled upon the answer to this problem and this discovery produced Rule Four of apocalyptic prophecy. Rule Four states, "The presence or absence of the Jubilee Calendar

¹ Bible prophecy does not always explicitly state important dates, but through studying Bible prophecy, we can determine these dates. For example, 457 B.C., A.D. 30, 1798, and 1844 are not explicitly mentioned in Scripture, but these dates are very important. In another case, the date of Christ's birth was not announced in Scripture, but the wise men figured it out!

determines how God measures time.” In other words, when the Jubilee Calendar is operating, the day for a year translation occurs. A day is translated as a year. When the Jubilee Calendar is not operating and there is no translation, prophetic timing is to be understood as stated. Therefore, I have concluded that the seven angels received the seven trumpets in the spring of 1994, at the expiration of the Jubilee Calendar. (Please examine this matter further by reading the “Addendum” located at the end of this study.)

What Happens Next?

For the purpose of explaining Revelation 8:2-5, let us proceed under the assumption that the seven angels were given the seven trumpets in the spring of 1994. So, the four angels in Revelation 7:1-3 have been *waiting* to hurt Earth for several years. We know they are waiting because (a) the five phenomena described in Revelation 8:3-7 have not occurred at any time in history, and (b) the first four trumpet judgments have not yet fallen. Therefore, the four angels in Revelation 7 are patiently waiting for the service described in Revelation 8:3-5 to occur.

“Another angel [that is, not one of the seven angels], who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of *all* the saints, on the golden altar [of Incense] before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel’s hand. 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.” (Revelation 8:3-5, italics and insertions mine)

The golden altar in front of God’s throne is the Altar of Incense. We know this because the golden altar in the earthly temple was the Altar of Incense (Hebrews 9:3,4) and it was positioned before the Table of the Presence (Exodus 26:35; 40:5) which represented God’s throne.¹

Further, the bronze Altar of Burnt Offering was located in the outer court and it was covered with bronze. (Exodus 38:2) To understand the significance of the service conducted at the Altar of Incense in Heaven’s temple, we have to first understand how the Altar of Incense functioned in the earthly temple because the tabernacle Moses built was a copy and shadow of the *true temple* in Heaven. (Hebrews 8:1-5)

Four Prerequisites

¹ For further discussion on the Table of the Presence, see pages 185-189 in my book, *Jesus, The Alpha and The Omega*.

The special service in Revelation 8:3-5 marks the close of corporate mercy and the beginning of the Great Tribulation. You need to understand and synthesize four prerequisites to understand why this service is conducted at the Altar of Incense:

1. Corporate Mercy

Before sin began, God commanded Adam and Eve to obey this law: **“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 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 2:16,17, KJV)

Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Neither person *defiantly* sinned against God, although they did sin. On the basis of love for Adam and Eve *and their future offspring*, Jesus interceded. God’s law demanded immediate death, but instead of killing the guilty pair, Jesus went to the Father and offered to die – not only in their place, but on behalf of all of their future offspring. The Father consented and on that very day, Jesus became “subject” to the will of the Father for the next 6,000 years. (Psalm 2:7-12, John 6:38, Hebrews 5:4-7) The emphatic point is that Adam and Eve were not immediately executed. Jesus mediated a “stay of execution” and Jesus has been holding back God’s wrath for 6,000 years. Many people do not understand this intercession. Even worse, they do not know that the intercession will soon end.

Jesus intercedes for sinners on two levels, the individual level and the corporate level. Both levels are separate, distinct, and important to understand. For example, corporately speaking, the world became corrupt in Noah’s day. When a majority of the antediluvians grieved away the Holy Spirit, the world went beyond the possibility of repentance. Jesus told Noah that since a majority of mankind was beyond redemption, He was going to destroy the world in 120 years. Jesus commanded Noah to build an ark and Noah went to work. Noah informed the world of God’s coming wrath and Noah encouraged people to enter the ark and be saved. When the appointed time arrived, the flood came and destroyed *all* but eight people. Even though God was angry with the *corporate* behavior of mankind, He extended mercy to *individuals* by offering refuge in Noah’s ark.

When it comes to understanding God’s goodness and grace, it is important to distinguish between corporate mercy and mercy for individuals. God can be angry with a nation like Israel and at the same time be happy with individuals like Daniel. Consider this: There were

two altars in the wilderness tabernacle. Individuals used the bronze Altar of Burnt Offering (located in the courtyard). Families brought their sin offerings to the bronze Altar of Burnt Offering each day. However, the golden Altar of Incense (located inside the tabernacle) was only used for *corporate* atonement. (Leviticus 4) Every evening and morning, priests offered atonement for the nation of Israel on the golden altar. Because there was continual atonement, sinners were not immediately executed when they sinned!

Notice how corporate grace aligns with grace and mercy for individuals. If an individual sinned in July and his family's turn at the Altar of Burnt Offering came in November (services at the Altar of Burnt Offering were rotated monthly according to tribe), the sinner knew that his death would be "stayed" because corporate intercession was made every evening and morning. In other words, corporate intercession provided a period of grace for individuals. This grace gave sinners time to make atonement if they wanted to make atonement.

Because Jesus has been corporately interceding for the whole world for the past 6,000 years, life on Earth has continued for the offspring of Adam and Eve. God's corporate grace has given billions of sinful individuals a chance to discover their need of a Savior. Once a person discovers Jesus as his Savior, he then realizes the wonderful corporate grace that was extended to him while he was in darkness. Out of joy and thanksgiving and praising God for the grace that He has provided, the sinner repents of his sins and offers himself as a living sacrifice unto the Lord.

At times, God dealt with Israel corporately, as though the whole nation was an individual. For example, God imposed the Babylonian captivity on everyone in Israel when a majority in Israel became hopelessly defiant and rebellious. Even though God punished the nation as one man, there were some individuals who pleased God, men like Ezekiel, Daniel, and Daniel's three friends. Nevertheless, God raised up a destroyer, King Nebuchadnezzar, to destroy Jerusalem and His temple. Of course, the Bible clearly indicates that God deals with individuals, too. You may remember the punishment of Achan (Joshua 7), Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numbers 16), and King David who was also punished for having an affair with Bathsheba. (2 Samuel 11). Individual consequences were not limited to Old Testament characters. God also punished Ananias and Sapphira for their rebellion against Him. (Acts 5)

Summarizing, the first thing that we need to remember about the special service at the Altar of Incense in Revelation 8:3-5 is that the

Altar of Incense concerns corporate intercession. *The casting down of the censer indicates the cessation of corporate intercession.* When the censer is cast down, God's destructive wrath will be released throughout Earth. This is why the seven trumpets occur after the censer is thrown down. God's corporate wrath begins when corporate mercy ends.

2. The Role of Prayers and Incense

Have you ever heard the expression, "Well, that just stinks!"? The idea behind this expression is that something went wrong and the consequences stink, that is, they are offensive. This may come as a surprise, but sinners dressed in their finest clothes are a stench in God's nostrils. This stench is not body odor, but our unrighteousness. God's heart is totally selfless and pure, and our hearts are just the opposite, totally selfish and impure. Sin cannot be washed away with water. Pilate did not remove his guilt in the death of Jesus by washing his hands. (Matthew 27:24) To teach Israel that even in their finest clothes, their hearts were still a stench in God's nostrils, God required the offering of a special fragrant incense each evening and each morning.

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Take fragrant spices – gum resin, onycha and galbanum – and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the Lord. Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from his people.' " (Exodus 30:34-38)

The Jews gathered around the temple when evening and morning services were offered because they reasoned that their petitions would be more favorably presented if they ascended with the sweet fragrance of holy incense. Think about this: If you petitioned a great king to grant a very important request, obviously a fragrant atmosphere would be more favorable than a smelly one! The practice of burning incense with corporate offerings explains why the angel in Revelation 8:3-5 was given much incense to burn on the Altar of Incense. God's people on Earth (a dear group of stinkers) will be desperately praying for God's help when Revelation 8:3-5 occurs, and the angel will add much incense on the Altar to "sweeten" their petitions – and the Lord will not disappoint.

3. The Use of Censers

In Bible times, small metal pans or censers were used to carry fire from one place to another. Since there were no matches or butane lighters, it was a lot easier to carry fire around than to start a fire. (Genesis 22:6) Thus, censers were rather common household devices in Bible times. Censers were also used in the temple for the purpose of carrying fire *during atonement services*. Notice how a censer of burning coals was used on the Day of Atonement: **“He [the high priest] is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord [the Altar of Incense] and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. He is to put the incense on the fire before the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover [The atonement cover was a removeable lid on the golden box that held the Ten Commandments. Two figurines of angels were attached to this lid and God’s glory radiated as a brilliant light from between these two angels. This light radiated] above the Testimony [the Ten Commandments are often called “the Testimony” in the Old Testament and the smoke from the incense protected the priest from this brilliant light], so that he will not die.”** (Leviticus 16:12,13, insertions mine)

The fire on the bronze Altar of Burnt Offering in the courtyard burned continuously. (Leviticus 6:13) Priests sustained this fire around the clock. However, there is no evidence in the Bible that the fire on the golden Altar of Incense was provided or sustained by man. I understand that God Himself ignited and sustained the fire on the Altar of Incense and this made that fire *holy* or set apart. In other words, the fire on the Altar of Incense was God-made and the fire that burned on the Altar of Burnt Offering was man-made. I mention this point for two reasons. First, the “strange” fire that Aaron’s two sons, Nadab and Abihu, used was most likely taken from the Altar of Burnt Offering. Evidently, they came before the Lord with man-made or “unholy” fire to burn incense. This action was a defiant sin and an insult to God. God responded to their impudence by killing them. (Leviticus 10:1,2) Second, I believe that God ignited and sustained the fire on the Altar of Incense because this perpetual burning fire represents Jesus’ unilateral and perpetual intercession for humanity. In other words, corporate grace has nothing to do with the efforts or desires of mankind. Corporate intercession is God’s gift to all sinners. The perpetual burning fire on the Altar of Incense represents His grace, His perpetual love for us that never goes out.

Summarizing, the priests used fire in the temple services and carried it in censers to burn incense. The casting down of the censer indicates the atonement service conducted on the Altar of Incense is finished. Since the Altar of Incense is limited to matters of corporate mercy, the casting down of the censer indicates the end of corporate mercy.

4. The Termination of the Daily

There is one more topic that will secure the conclusion that Revelation 8:3-5 marks the end of corporate mercy. Daniel 12:11,12 says, **“From the time that the daily [service] sacrifice¹ is abolished [in Heaven] and the abomination that causes desolation is set up [This abomination that causes desolation points forward to a universal death decree that will be set up to kill all of God’s saints on the 1290th day of the Great Tribulation.²], there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for [patiently endures] and reaches the end of the 1,335 days [allotted for the Great Tribulation].”** (Insertions and strikethrough mine)

The tabernacle on Earth was a copy and shadow of Heaven’s temple. According to Hebrews 8:1-5, Jesus serves in Heaven’s *true tabernacle* as our High Priest. This wonderful truth enables us to understand things about services in Heaven’s temple that would be impossible to otherwise understand. For example, since there was a daily service in the earthly temple, there must also be a daily service in Heaven’s temple. The daily service in the earthly temple consisted of two routines. The first routine centered around corporate atonement. Every evening and morning, the priests presented an atonement offering before the Lord on the Altar of Incense. The priests conducted a second routine at the Altar of Burnt Offering. During daylight hours, people brought their sin offerings to the Altar of Burnt Offering. Both services were considered perpetual, continual or “daily.”

The book of Daniel mentions “the abomination that causes desolation” two times. The first mention points to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. (Daniel 11:31, Matthew 24:15) The second mention (Daniel 12:11) points to a daily service that will end in Heaven’s temple and 1,290 days later, a universal death decree will be imposed on God’s saints. How do we know that Daniel 12:11 is speaking about the daily service that occurs at the Altar of Incense in Heaven’s temple?

¹ The word “sacrifice” in verse 11 is not in the Hebrew text. It is supplied by well-meaning translators. However, the word “sacrifice” is misleading. A better choice would have been the word “service.”

² See my book, *Daniel Unlocked for the Final Generation*, pages 228-233.

Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy further requires that we examine the context. The context in Daniel 12 clearly concerns the end of time. Consider the first two verses in chapter 12: **“At that time Michael [Jesus], the great prince who protects your people, will arise** [indicating that His mediation for mankind has been completed. He will stand up – a position that kings take when moved by indignation]. **There will be a time of distress** [the seven last plagues – the seven bowls] **such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people** [who are alive] – **everyone whose name is found written in the book** [of Life] – **will be delivered** [from further martyrdom]. [Then, at the Second Coming] **Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others** [including those who participated in the crucifixion of Jesus¹ will be raised] **to shame and everlasting contempt.”** (Daniel 12:1,2, insertions mine)

Now that we know the context in Daniel 12 is the end of days and the Second Coming, consider the final words in Daniel 12: **“He [Gabriel] replied,** ‘[Daniel, you have been shown things about the distant future.] **Go your way** [go about your business], **Daniel, because the words** [of this prophecy] **are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.** [There will be many difficult centuries for the saints.] **Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand** [these visions], **but those who are wise will understand** [how these words apply to them]. **From the time that the daily** [service in Heaven] **sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation** [a universal death decree for God’s people] **is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who** [patiently] **waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days** [for he will see Jesus coming in clouds of glory without seeing death]. **As for you [Daniel], go your way till the end** [of your life]. **You will rest** [with your fathers in death], **and then at the end of the [1,335] days you will rise** [with all of God’s saints] **to receive your allotted inheritance.’ ”** (Daniel 12:9-12, insertions mine)

Because the context in Daniel 12 is the end of the age, it should be rather easy to see that “the daily” in verse 11 points to an event that is 1,335 days before the Second Coming. Moreover, if there was a daily service on Earth at the Altar of Incense, then there has to be a daily service in Heaven at the Altar of Incense because services in the earthly

¹ See Revelation 1:7 and Matthew 26:64.

temple parallels services in Heaven's temple. We already know that corporate mercy will end when the censer is cast down and God's wrath (the seven trumpets) will follow, therefore, the timing of the daily in Daniel 12:11 is the same as the casting down of the censer in Revelation 8:3-5.

Intermediate Summary

Thus far, we have found that the Altar of Incense concerns the administration of corporate mercy. The casting down of the censer indicates the end of atonement at this altar, that is, the end of corporate grace for the world. After corporate grace is terminated, the four angels will sound the first four trumpets which will harm the Earth. God's wrath will break out on the whole world. There will be physical phenomena announcing God's wrath. These physical phenomena will occur simultaneously all over the world. There will be a global earthquake. The whole world will be halted, unexpectedly arrested by awesome and violent displays of nature. Mankind will be put on notice with these physical phenomena that God's anger cannot be contained any longer. A few hours, or perhaps days, after the censer is cast down, the first trumpet will sound and a firestorm of burning hail will fall from the sky and burn up one-third of Earth. There is perfect harmony in the sum of all the parts!

Praying Saints

Returning to verse 3: **“Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar [of Incense]. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of *all* the saints, on the golden altar [that stands] before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints [their petitions], went up before God [a very sweet aroma filled the court] from the angel's hand. 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.”** (Revelation 8:3-5, insertions and italics mine)

Notice the chronological sequence of events. Verse 3 says that *all* of God's saints are praying for something. Then, in verse 4 the angel presents their petitions to God, and in verse 5, God favorably responds to the petitions of His saints by commanding the angel¹ at the altar to cast down the censer.

¹ To be proper, this angel serves as a priest to Jesus. Jesus alone, as our High Priest, authorizes the casting down of the censer. Given the nature of this special service, it does not seem likely that an angel would presume to throw the censer down of his own accord.

The Bible says that “**all**” of the saints (God’s children everywhere) are petitioning God when Revelation 8:3-5 occurs. The *only* thing that could move *all* of God’s children at the *same* time, as religiously diverse as we are, is a global crisis. What global crisis, after 1994, but prior to the end of corporate grace, would cause Jesus to issue a command to cast down the censer?

Nuclear War?

There is one possibility that could cause *all* of God’s saints to pray for the same thing at the same time, namely, nuclear war. Here is a possible scenario. One day, simmering hostilities could erupt and quickly escalate into a nuclear exchange. Tens of millions could die in this war. This war could affect our struggling global economy and immediately affect the distribution of oil, food, clothing, building materials, and commerce of all kinds. If nations joined in, this war could quickly become a fearful event for most everyone on Earth. If such a war occurred – and the global consequences would be far reaching – the whole world would cry out (demand) “peace and safety.” In other words, a nuclear exchange could bring *all* of God’s people to the point of praying for God’s intervention.

Paul wrote: **“While people are [frantically] saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction [from God] will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.”** (1 Thessalonians 5:3,4, insertions mine)

There is no reason to be surprised about sudden destruction coming from God if we allow Revelation 8 to speak. We can be sure of two things. First, it’s only a matter of time until there is a nuclear exchange. Second, when a nuclear exchange occurs, human efforts will be made to stop the war for the sake of *global* “peace and safety.” The problem is that the speed of intercontinental missiles is measured in seconds, but getting nations to negotiate peace can take years. Besides, once a nation’s sovereignty and survival is threatened by nuclear bombs, what would be the point of any nation using restraint against such an enemy? The maxim for nuclear war is simple: “Annihilate or be annihilated.”

Suppose an angel rushes to the Altar of Incense after a nuclear exchange, and together with the petitions of *all* the saints, he puts much incense on the coals of the altar and a sweet fragrance ascends

before God's throne. As Almighty God, Jesus answers the prayers of His saints by stepping into the din of war with overwhelming power and authority. Jesus sends physical manifestations that are so magnificent and awesome that the war actually stops! He who calmed the storm on Galilee calms this war. Then, the first trumpet sounds and a hailstorm of burning meteors burn up a third of Earth. The nations of Earth suddenly discover that man's nuclear bombs are no match for "the wrath of the Lion from the tribe of Judah." Sudden destruction from God will miniaturize man's nuclear exchanges. The destructive power of Jesus will dwarf anything that mankind has to offer. Suddenly, man's biggest problem is not nation against nation, it is a whole world facing the wrath of one God!

Summary on Revelation 8:2-5

By now, you should understand that (a) there were two altars in the earthly temple because there are two levels of atoning grace, corporate and individual, (b) incense was used each evening and morning on the Altar of Incense to mask the stench of sin and sinners, (c) censers were used during the atonement services to carry fire, and (d) the termination of *daily* services at the Altar of Incense in Heaven's temple is dated 1,335 days before the Second Coming. When we align these four topics with the events described in Revelation 8:3-5, it is safe to conclude that Revelation 8:3-5 describes the end of corporate mercy because *this was the only form of atonement offered on the earthly Altar of Incense*. Moreover, the punitive judgments (the seven trumpets) that follow the casting down of the censer perfectly align with this conclusion. When corporate grace ends, corporate wrath begins.

Just before the censer is cast down, all of God's saints will be praying for divine help. A nuclear exchange could move all of God's people to pray for peace. The point here is that Jesus responds to the prayers of the saints by terminating the daily service at the Altar of Incense. He will command the angel to cast down the censer. After the censer is cast down, the Bible continues the sequence saying, "**Then the seven angels who had [been waiting with] the seven trumpets [since 1994] prepared to sound them.**" (Revelation 8:6, insertions mine)

The First Four Trumpets

The first four trumpets will come in a group of four rapid-fire judgments. I understand that these four judgments could fall over a period of about sixty days. These four judgments will occur in their stated order. Four distinctive blows will produce unimaginable death

and destruction. They will change the thinking and priorities of mankind overnight. The death and destruction left in their wake will be incalculable, and amazingly, all of this global upheaval will be caused by a team of only four angels! It is a gross understatement to say the whole world will be in shambles by the time the fourth trumpet judgment has been executed.

If actions speak louder than words, the first four trumpets will speak volumes. Jesus has much to say to this diverse world. To get everyone's attention, He will send a display of power and destruction that will silence the din of war and the defiance of skeptics. Keep in mind that Jesus' display of power and destruction will not be a temper tantrum. Jesus will not smash and trash the world in a random way. His display of wrath is carefully designed to accomplish many objectives and one of them is to prompt a unified response from mankind.

Fire and Water

The first two trumpets will be judgments of fire and water. The first judgment will come as a fire storm of burning hail. Jesus will rain down white hot meteors on notoriously wicked places and incinerate them (just as He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah). The second judgment will be an asteroid impact in an ocean. The resulting tsunami will destroy *thousands* of coastal cities. It appears that God uses the fire of the first trumpet to sterilize wicked cities that cannot be destroyed by water, and then uses the water of the second trumpet to wash away wicked cities whose cup of iniquity is overflowing.

The third judgment will be an asteroid impact on a continent that is beyond redemption. This huge impact will compromise geologic strata for thousands of square miles. Underground aquifers will become contaminated with human waste and toxic garbage. Wells and springs will produce poisoned water and millions of thirsty people will drink the poisonous water and die. The fourth trumpet will be a period of darkness. The Bible does not explain the cause of darkness, but it could easily be caused by hundreds of simultaneous volcano eruptions. If the Pacific "ring of fire" belched enough ejecta into the atmosphere, the jet stream could easily blanket the *middle third* of Earth with enough soot and debris to darken the Sun, moon, and stars. If this darkness lasts for a few weeks, agricultural crops would not produce food. Global winter and famine would quickly follow.

The first four trumpets will fall upon notably wicked *places* for two reasons. First, the last three trumpets are directed at wicked *people*.

This is why they are called three “woes” or curses. (Revelation 8:13)
 Second, Jesus wants the survivors of the first four trumpets to realize that His judgments are not random episodes of nature’s violence. Jesus wants the survivors to realize that these destructive events are deliberate manifestations of God’s wrath. In other words, the wholesale destruction of *notably wicked places* within sixty days will put the whole world on notice that there really is a living God and He is very angry with man’s degenerate behavior. Some scientists will argue that the geological history of Earth supports catastrophic events at predictable intervals every million years or so, and calamities like these have happened before. However, the first four trumpets will discredit and silence science. Scientists will not be able to explain how notably wicked places all over the world became divine targets of destruction.

The First Trumpet

“The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood [Hail and fire mixed with blood indicates this judgment is mixed with mercy. The atoning blood of Jesus limits the scope of this destructive judgment to one-third of the world.], **and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth** [the Greek word for earth, *ge* means land] **was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass** [the Greek word for grass, *chortos* includes vegetation and crops] **was burned up.** [The repetitive use of one-third indicates that mercy is mixed in with God’s wrath.] (Revelation 8:7, insertions mine)

The Second Trumpet

The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain [perhaps a mile or more in diameter], **all ablaze, was thrown into the sea.** [The asteroid was so hot that it made the water anoxic and] **A third of the sea turned into** [the color of] **blood** [caused by the rapid growth of red algae which thrives in anoxic water], **a third of the living creatures in the sea died** [because the water is oxygen deficient and what little oxygen is present is consumed by red algae], **and a third of the ships were destroyed** [by the huge tsunami resulting from the impact]. (Revelation 8:8,9, insertions mine)

The Third Trumpet

The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star [a second asteroid, perhaps a mile or more in diameter], **blazing like a torch** [as streams of fire trailed behind the fireball], **fell from the sky** [and impacted Earth. The result of this impact will be noticed] **on a third**

of the rivers and on the springs of water – the name of the star is Wormwood [poisoned waters]. A third of the waters turned bitter [poisonous], and many people [agonizing from thirst] died from [drinking] the waters that had become bitter. (Revelation 8:10,11, insertions mine)

The Fourth Trumpet

The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and [hundreds of huge volcanos erupted] a third of the sun [’s light] was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night. [The middle third of Earth – where ninety percent of its population lives – became dark.] (Revelation 8:12, insertions mine)

More Trumpets Coming!

As I watched, I heard an eagle [this eagle is one of the four living creatures, it has the face of an eagle and it oversees the destruction of the fourth seal - Revelation 4:7, 6:7,8] that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: [“Get ready for three greater curses.”] ‘Woe! Woe! Woe [cursed, cursed, cursed] to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!’ ” (Revelation 8:13, insertions mine)

Are These Judgments Literal or Symbolic?

Did you notice that each trumpet judgment produces a *literal* result? For example, in verse 7, fire comes down from the sky and *burns* up a third of the trees and vegetation. In verse 9, a third of the *ships sink* after a great mountain impacts the sea. In verse 11, *people die* from drinking poisoned water after a blazing star impacts Earth. These events are consistent with the laws of physics, so it is possible the first four trumpets are literal descriptions of literal events. In other words, what else would fire, trees, and vegetation symbolize in the first trumpet if not fire, trees, and vegetation? What else *sinks* real ships and causes *real* people to die if not two great asteroid impacts? For that matter, what do the sea creatures and people drinking poisonous water represent in verse 11 if not *real* sea creatures and *real* people? What else could the sun, moon, and stars represent in verse 12 if not the sun, moon, and stars that are normally visible?

When it comes to interpreting apocalyptic prophecy, many pastors and scholars do not understand the necessity of using valid rules of interpretation. *When valid rules are not used, one cannot study the*

book of Revelation and arrive at its intended meaning. This oversight has led many scholars to assert that the seven trumpets are symbols because they believe “the whole book of Revelation is a book of symbolism.” If we evaluate the core of this argument, it is just another way of saying, “No one really knows what Revelation means.” For hundreds of years this tactic has enabled so-called experts to spin fancy interpretations that have little or nothing to do with the intended meaning.

If the book of Revelation forever remains a book of symbolism, we face two insurmountable problems. First, what kind of language would God have to use if He wanted mankind to regard the fire, trees, and vegetation in the first trumpet as literal fire, trees, and vegetation? What words would God have to use if He wanted us to understand that during the third trumpet desperate people will drink poisoned water out of rivers and springs and die? If God wants the world to know that the first four trumpets are literal events, what would He have to say? We know that the four phenomena (peals of thunder, rumblings, lightning, and the earthquake) that precede the fiery hail of the first trumpet are literal, and we can see that the first four trumpets are consistent with the laws of physics, so treating the first four trumpets as symbols is not a valid argument.

If the first four trumpets are in fact symbolic descriptions of things other than what they say, where are these symbols defined? When a prophetic element is deemed symbolic, human beings are not free to interpret symbols according to their imagination. There must be *relevant Bible texts* to define the symbol, otherwise, the Bible cannot speak for itself. According to Rule Three, every time God *creates a symbol in apocalyptic prophecy*, God Himself defines *that* symbol. This simple process enables the Bible to speak for itself, that is, without an interpreter (pastor or scholar).

Consider two examples. A great prostitute is introduced in Revelation 17:1 and she is defined a few verses later (verse 18) as “the great city” that will rule over the kings of Earth. The seven stars in Revelation 1:16 are defined a few verses later (verse 20) as “the seven angels of the seven churches.” These two examples show how *relevant texts* interpret symbols. When we follow valid rules of interpretation, we are not at liberty to go rummaging through the Bible to find a disconnected verse that we can apply to something that we want to call a symbol. When God wants something understood as a symbol, *He always defines the symbol by declaring the meaning of the symbol in a relevant text.* Rule

Three of apocalyptic prophecy says, “Apocalyptic language can be literal, symbolic, or analogous. To reach the intended meaning of an apocalyptic prophecy, the student must consider (a) the context, (b) the use of parallel language in the Bible, and (c) relevant texts that define the symbol if an element is thought to be symbolic.” If we follow this simple rule (along with the other three), we will avoid reaching conclusions that have nothing to do with the intended meaning.

Calling the first four judgments “symbolic” is unwarranted. God has described the seven trumpets with language that makes perfect sense once you understand the full cup principle, God’s use of vocabulary, and the end of corporate mercy. Everyone on Earth will see and experience the first four trumpets when they fall. They will be very literal and very harmful.

Jesus Spares Two-thirds

Did you notice the repetitive use of thirds in the first four trumpets? The Bible says a third of the trees were burned up, a third of the ships sank, and a third of the day was without light. “One-third” is mentioned twelve times in the seven trumpets! This repetition is deliberate and important because Jesus assures us a dozen times in the seven trumpets that He is a generous King. To understand the ancient practice of sparing one-third and destroying two-thirds, we have to examine some passages from the Old Testament.

During Old Testament times, if a conquering king felt that grace was merited or that grace was politically expedient, he would spare one-third of his enemies after defeating them. Notice this text: **“David also defeated the Moabites. He made them lie down on the ground and measured them off with a length of cord. Every two lengths of them were put to death, and the third length was allowed to live. So the Moabites became subject to David and brought tribute [paid their taxes].”** (2 Samuel 8:2, insertion mine)

King David was as generous as he was wise. He spared one-third of the Moabites for two *redemptive* reasons. First, he felt the surviving Moabites might have a change of mind and gladly pay their tribute [taxes] if he spared their lives. (Isn’t it amazing what people can do when motivated by gratitude?) Second, David did not want to destroy his tax base. David knew that in years to come, the Moabites would recover from this war and repopulate. Their future taxes would mean additional income for Israel’s treasury! So, David spared “a third” of the Moabites. Now that you understand why ancient kings sometimes

spared one-third of their enemies, notice that Jesus followed this principle when He destroyed Jerusalem during the days of Nebuchadnezzar:

“Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I myself will withdraw my favor; I will not look on you with pity or spare you. *A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword.*”
(Ezekiel 5:11,12, italics mine)

This last text is another confirmation of the ancient custom of sparing one-third and destroying two-thirds:

“‘In the whole land,’ declares the Lord, ‘two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it.’”
(Zechariah 13:8)

Now that we have surveyed the ancient custom of sparing one-third and destroying two-thirds, the process of destroying one-third in Revelation should make sense. This repetitive language tells us the seven trumpets are *redemptive* in nature. The seven trumpets will be mixed with mercy (remember, atonement blood was mixed with the fire that was cast down upon Earth). Instead of destroying two-thirds of everything, the Lord restrains Himself by only destroying one-third. In other words, Jesus is “double generous!” Of course, very few people will think that Jesus is double generous when He destroys one-third of everything on Earth, but man’s ignorance has no bearing on God’s actions. Man learns from God, not the other way around. If Jesus destroyed two-thirds of everything during the seven trumpets, His wrath would be justified in the eyes of watching angels because corporately speaking, Earth today is very similar to Earth in Noah’s day – beyond corporate redemption.

Sixty Days?

Earlier, I indicated that the first four trumpet judgments will produce death and destruction on a biblical scale that exceeds human calculation. These four judgments will ruin Earth to the extent that recovery will be impossible. I also indicated that the first four trumpets will occur during a period of about sixty days. Even though the Bible does not explicitly declare the timing of the first four trumpets, there is some indication they will happen in a rapid-fire sequence after the

censer is cast down. Please consider the following:

The Bible predicts that mankind will quickly respond to the first four trumpets by setting up a **crisis government called “Babylon.”** Of course, world leaders will not call their new creation “Babylon.” The Bible calls this coming government “Babylon” because its behavior will parallel the ancient kingdom of Babylon, **both in arrogance and ignorance.** The Bible also indicates Babylon will persecute God’s saints for forty-two months. (Revelation 13:5) Because the Great Tribulation will last approximately forty-five months (1,335 days, Daniel 12:11,12), Babylon has to form within ninety days after the Great Tribulation begins in order to persecute the saints for forty-two months (forty-five months minus forty-two months leaves ninety days). Since Babylon has to begin persecuting the saints within ninety days after the censer is cast down, this suggests that the first four trumpets will come in a rapid-fire sequence. Here is why:

1. A rapid-fire sequence of judgments on notably wicked places will silence the argument that these horrific events were random acts of nature. If the first four trumpets were months apart, these judgments could be interpreted as random acts of nature and the argument favoring a random string of “natural disasters” would be difficult to silence. Moreover, if the first four trumpets were months apart, nothing else could move diverse religions and nations to unite and form Babylon so that the persecution of God’s people all over the world can begin within ninety days.
2. If the first four trumpets were months apart, it would be impossible to get people to thoughtfully consider the gospel presented by the 144,000. (The 144,000 will begin their work on the day the censer is cast down.) Until religious paradigms are shattered and a theological vacuum is created, people will not listen to a gospel that is contrary to their current beliefs. If the first four trumpets do fall within a short period on notably wicked places, this would force reasoning people to admit that (a) God is on the warpath against wickedness, and (b) something must be done quickly to appease God or He may destroy everyone.
3. If the first four trumpets occurred in a rapid-fire sequence, the resulting shock and awe would totally overwhelm the whole world. Panic and trembling would be so great that a war involving nuclear exchanges would end. Panic and fear of “The Living God” would bring world leaders (religious and political) into a humble union. United by terror and motivated by fear, they would move *quickly* to

appease God. *Man’s fear of more wrath explains the sudden formation of Babylon.* Everyone on Earth will conclude that God is angry. Of course, extreme circumstances require desperate solutions, and the Bible predicts that man’s solution to appeasing God’s wrath will be extreme (otherwise unthinkable).

When these factors are combined and mathematically aligned, it is reasonable to conclude that the first four trumpets will occur within ninety days. Furthermore, it seems likely that Babylon’s persecution could begin as early as the sixty-fourth day of the Great Tribulation. Evidently, Babylon forms during the darkness of the fourth trumpet, and Babylon’s leaders will humbly, logically, and out of necessity, move quickly to do everything possible to appease God by reversing man’s degeneracy. However, in their efforts to do good, the leaders of Babylon will end up doing evil – persecuting God’s saints for forty-two months.

Even though we have not discussed and aligned all of the time periods mentioned in the book of Revelation, I hope you will consider the data presented in Diagram 12.2. As this commentary progresses through the book of Revelation, it should become increasingly clear that God has left very little wiggle room for moving things around in the book of Revelation once all the prophecies are put on the table. For now, this simple chart should give a basic understanding of where this commentary is headed.

Timing Considerations

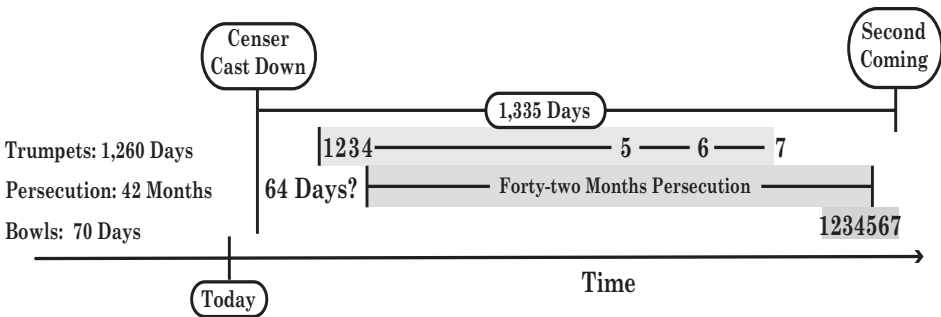


Diagram 12.2 (not drawn to scale)

The Last Three Trumpets

“Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the Earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!”
(Revelation 8:13)

The first four trumpets will destroy notoriously wicked places all over the world and will cause twenty-five percent of the world’s population to die. Since the first four trumpets will be utterly destructive, you might expect the last three trumpets to be more of the same. Actually, the last three trumpets are quite different from the first four. The first four trumpets will awaken billions of people. They will hear a powerful message and many of them will thoughtfully consider a gospel that is totally contrary to what they presently believe. Since Jesus is not willing that anyone should perish, the last three trumpets can be regarded as a second attempt to move stubborn and rebellious people toward the right choice. The people of Earth will literally see demons with unvarnished clarity. Once this revelation occurs, a few will “see the light” and embrace the gospel of Jesus. When God has done everything possible to demonstrate right from wrong, there is nothing more He can do to save those who choose to do wrong.

The fifth trumpet marks the physical appearing of Lucifer. Lucifer is the dreaded Antichrist. He is the embodiment of evil. In an attempt to mimic Christ’s return, he will arise out of the Abyss to descend from the sky with 200,000,000 evil angels. (Revelation 9:3,16) He will appear as a most impressive, glorious being of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14) The devil will claim to be Almighty God and he will prove his assumed identity by performing incredible miracles at will. (Revelation 13:13,14) He will deceive billions of people and his demons will subdue anyone who stands in opposition to his presumed authority with searing pain. (Those who have already received the seal of God will not be harmed. Revelation 9:4)

The sixth trumpet will be a world war. Lucifer will initiate this war. In the process, he will kill a third of mankind in order to take control of Earth and establish a “theocracy.” The devil will abolish the religions and governments of the world and will establish ten kings as “taskmasters.” The devil will be ruthless and victorious in his efforts to conquer the world. For a short time, Lucifer will appear to reign over the whole world as “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

The seventh trumpet marks the end of God’s grace for individuals and the beginning of the seven bowls. The seven bowls will last seventy

days. The world and all of the surviving wicked will be destroyed by the end of the seventh bowl. (The Second Coming occurs at the end of the seventh bowl.)

Before we examine the last three trumpets in detail, you need to be aware of several developments that will transpire between the fourth and fifth trumpets. The time between the beginning of persecution in the fourth trumpet and the fifth trumpet will be approximately 826 days (about 27.5 months). Although Babylon will be studied in greater detail in a later chapter titled “The Four Beasts of Revelation,” you need to understand a few things about Babylon and its mission in order to appreciate the significance of the fifth trumpet.

What is Babylon?

Babylon is represented in Revelation 13:1-8 as a leopard-like monster that will rise out of the sea. Babylon represents man’s response to God’s wrath. Babylon will be a religious government with a simple objective: Babylon will attempt to appease God so that His wrath will cease. The “sea” from which Babylon will rise represents **“peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.”** (Revelation 17:15) In other words, Babylon will arise from *within* the nations of the world. After the first four trumpets turn the world upside down, the political leaders of the world will humbly submit to the authority of Babylon. The Bible predicts this amazing turnover with these words: “. . . **And he** [Babylon, the leopard-like beast] **was given** [the gift of] **authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.**” (Revelation 13:7, insertion and italics mine)

Babylon will be a “monster-sized” church-state government. Babylon’s leaders will dictate how the civil governments of the world are to proceed in their efforts to appease God so that His wrath will cease. Today, it goes beyond comprehension to say that a time is coming when the world’s political leaders will submit to the dictates of a one-world religious government, but the destruction caused by the first four trumpets is unimaginable, too. When the world witnesses God’s devastating wrath on notably wicked places and smells the stench of 1.75 billion dead people, almost everyone will have a dramatic change in their thinking about God. His authority and our accountability to Him will become topics of greatest concern.

During the gloomy darkness of the fourth trumpet, the religious leaders of the world will convene and conceive a well-intended, but foolish plan to appease God. They will unanimously agree that *one* God is angry

with *all* mankind and that degenerate behavior has provoked God's wrath against all nations. Therefore, religious leaders will conclude that *all* nations and *all* religions must unite *as one family to appease Him*. "If we do this," they will say, "our chances of offending God further will be reduced. Perhaps He will have mercy on the whole world when He sees that all mankind is anxious to please Him and our sincerity is global."

Three Enabling Lies

Humbled by overwhelming destruction and desperate to appease God so that His judgments will cease, the world's religious leaders will form a religious government to appease God's wrath. The basis for this government will be three enabling lies. The first lie: Everyone on Earth worships the *same* God, even though He is called by different names. This lie will be convincing because the rapid-fire destruction of the first four trumpets points to the handiwork of *one* God. This lie will enable the clergy of the world to temporarily lay aside their theological differences so that they can unite on two principles which all religions hold in common. The first principle is that God's wrath is aroused by decadent and degenerate behavior. While this principle is true, religious leaders will conclude that God would be pleased to have the nations enact laws forbidding degenerate behavior. Many people will conclude that this deduction is reasonable, but this is the second lie. A God of love is pleased when people *choose* of their own free will to forsake evil and obey His commands, but He has no part or interest in *forced* righteousness. The second principle that all religions have in common is the belief that Almighty God rules the universe and He is entitled to respect and worship. Babylon will claim that God will be pleased to have a government formed promoting respect for Him and the worship of the Almighty. Of course, this is the third lie. Babylon does not speak for God and even worse, Babylon's demands will stand in direct opposition to God's law.

Once the political leaders of the world consent, the leaders of Babylon will move forward to implement a dramatic plan to appease God so that His judgments will cease. Everyone will be required to show respect for Almighty God. Many "sin-less" laws will be enacted and enforced. Babylon will declare a specific day for worship and require businesses to close on that day. The irony is that Babylon's solution to appeasing God is built on the three enabling lies. The leaders of Babylon will tell the world that they are confident that their plan to appease God is the right thing to do and billions of people will agree with their religious leaders. However, the 144,000 will boldly tell the world that Babylon is

on the wrong track! The 144,000 will confront Babylon's lies with Scripture and honest hearted people will find themselves trying to determine the truth.

The fact that Babylon will require all nations to set aside a day for the worship of God will quickly get the attention of the world. In Moslem nations, laws regarding the holiness of Friday will be imposed. In countries where Christianity is the primary religion, laws regarding the holiness of Sunday will be imposed. In Israel, laws regarding the holiness of Saturday will be imposed. This duplicity on Babylon's part will cause honest hearted people to question how a one world government can appease the *same* God with different laws in different lands. The three lies that enabled the formation of Babylon will be undermined by Babylon's own behavior.

Babylon's Seven Heads

The leopard-like beast has seven heads¹ and ten horns. When Babylon rises to power, the Bible says that **one** of the seven heads "**had been healed.**" (Revelation 13:3) Notice that the phrase, "had been healed," is stated in the past perfect tense. This means that when the leopard-like beast rises from the sea, the deadly wound will be completely healed.

The seven heads represent the seven religious systems of Earth. If one head is a religious system, then the remaining six have to be religious systems too, because there are seven heads. Each religious system is a blasphemous organization – that is, each religious system is defiant to the will of God. This defiance is described with this phrase, "**and on each head [was written] a blasphemous name.**" (Revelation 13:1, insertion mine) At the present time, this defiance is not discernable within each religious system because each religious system claims (and its followers believe) that it teaches the truth about the will of God. Nevertheless, the honest in heart will see, in due time, that the claims

¹ The seven heads represent Atheism, Heathenism, Judaism, Islam, Eastern Mysticism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. See the chapter, "The Four Beasts of Revelation," for more details. Some people claim that Atheism is not a religion, but I maintain that it qualifies as one of the seven religious systems of the world. I state it this way because Atheism truly is a faith-based church system. Atheism believes there is no God. Some people have argued that Atheism insists on the separation of church and state. Historically, this premise is not sustainable. Wherever Atheism controls government, it does not permit the free exercise of any other religion. Atheism is the religion of the state. Atheistic governments behave like a church-state government because they are a church-state government.

of *all* seven religious systems are blatantly false. When the 144,000 begin speaking the testimony of Jesus, the religions of the world will fight back with prejudice, lies, insults, and persecution. The devil has used these well worn tools for thousands of years to keep God's truth hidden from sight, but there is nothing more powerful than a truth whose time has come. The religious systems of the world will be exposed. They are blasphemous and it will not take long for the honest in heart to recognize the gross deception that has kept them in darkness.

The Wounded Head

The *head* that was wounded and "had been healed" when Babylon rises to power represents the Roman Catholic Church. The authority of the Catholic Church over the kings and nations of Europe began with Emperor Justinian's decree in March, A.D. 533 (but the decree remained ineffective until A.D. 538). The Church's authority over the kings of Europe lasted 1,260 years. (Daniel 7:25, Revelation 12:6,14) When this prophetic period ended, the French Revolution (1789-1799) fatally wounded the authority of the Church when Pope Pius VI was dethroned and put in prison (February 1798). One hundred thirty-one years later, on June 7, 1929, Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, on behalf of King Victor Emmanuel III, granted the Catholic Church the right to exist as a sovereign state. This grant to the Catholic Church is known as the Lateran Accords or Treaty. This event granted the pope sovereign rulership over the State of Vatican City and more importantly, the pope was set free to direct and lead the Catholic Church without accountability to any nation.

For the past eighty years, the religious and political influence of the Catholic Church has been steadily growing throughout the world. In recent years (largely due to the extraordinary popularity of Pope John Paul II, 1920-2005), the Roman Catholic Church has become a significant political force in the world. Pope Benedict's reception and extravagant birthday party at the White House (hosted by President George Bush on April 16, 2008) is a recent event demonstrating the Church has *regained* a position of international respect and power. Many nations (170 at this writing) have ambassadors assigned to the Vatican. However, the deadly wound *will not be healed* until the Roman Catholic Church once again exercises authority over sovereign governments.

When world leaders convene during the fourth trumpet to create Babylon, I believe three amazing decisions will come out of this emergency meeting.

1. Recognizing the religious diversity of mankind and given the obvious fact that **one** God has destroyed a third of the world, this emergency council will agree that all nations must unite *as a family* to appease God so that His wrath will cease. This council will agree that a number of “sin-less” laws must be enacted and enforced or God’s anger will continue to burn against mankind. This council will also agree that God must be respected and worshiped. This council will conclude that anyone defying laws that honor God should be punished because it is better for one person to suffer for wrong doing than for the whole world to suffer additional destruction due to God’s wrath. They will conclude that enforcing high standards of conduct is the only way that God’s wrath against world decadence will stop.
2. Because everyone at the council will know that God’s anger was directed at notably wicked places all over the world, political leaders will acquiesce to the suggestions of religious experts. Political leaders will have no choice but to accept the responsibility of enacting and enforcing laws to reduce sinful behavior. All nations will participate in this endeavor because world leaders believe that God’s wrath could possibly break out against the *whole* world if any *part* of the world family fails to participate. Political leaders will be put in the position of having no choice but to go along with **Babylon’s** mandates in hopes that Babylon’s directions will quickly resolve the awful **crisis** that exists between God and man.
3. Leaders of the world understand that every governing body requires qualified leadership. A supreme council, something like the Security Council of the United Nations will be created. Given the dire circumstances caused by the first four trumpets, Babylon will be far more effective than the Security Council. *I believe the pope will be selected as the leader of Babylon for four reasons.* First, the healing of the deadly wound has been ongoing since 1929. Second, the Catholic Church is uniquely prepared to serve the world through its diplomatic relations with 170 nations. Third, the Roman Catholic Church believes a church-led state is the best form of government. Finally, the Bible predicts the deadly wound will be healed (Revelation 13:3) and the little horn of Daniel 7 (the papacy) will speak boastfully after 1844 (Daniel 7:11). These four reasons lead me to conclude that the pope will be chosen to lead Babylon.

The pope **will not**, however, be put in a position to impose Catholic doctrines on Atheists, Jews, Eastern Mystics, Muslims, Heathens, or Protestants. The diversity of the world’s religions will not permit this.

Rather, the authority of the pope will be like that of the Secretary General of the United Nations. He will serve as Babylon's "chief facilitator." He and the supreme council of Babylon will direct *the governments of the world in a global effort to appease God*.

Babylon **will not** displace the civil governments of the world's nations. Rather, the demands of Babylon will be imposed on all nations and they will be applied according to the prevailing customs and religions of each nation. The basic idea is that civil government will be *used* by Babylon's leadership to enforce laws on people so they will commit fewer sins. Keep in mind that laws important to Muslims will not be applicable in Catholic or Hindu countries and vice versa. The leaders of Babylon (and the rest of the world) will soon discover that it is impossible for the human race to worship the *same* God as one family. Our diverse religious views and our cultural paradigms will not allow it.

Martial Law

During the first four trumpets, each nation will be forced to suspend its constitution so that martial law can be enacted. Given the size and scope of God's wrath, world leaders will do whatever it takes to maintain control. Food and water supplies will be rationed. Medical care and energy reserves will be scarce. Hunger and thirst will drive millions of dazed and bewildered people crazy. Extreme situations require desperate solutions. Earth's population has never seen a global crisis like the first four trumpets. The crisis will be so huge that political leaders in every nation *will be set free of their constitutional obligations* almost immediately. This freedom will permit them to enact and enforce laws they would have been strongly opposed to during normal times. The declaration of martial law will make it very easy for lawmakers to comply with the demands of Babylon's clergy. Given the fact that something *must* be done to appease God, very few citizens will complain – at first.

After Babylon begins to function as a religious authority over the nations of the world, Babylon's laws will become increasingly oppressive and restrictive. Remember, laws will be enacted demanding that everyone set aside one day for worshiping God. Later on, these laws will be amended and mandatory worship on specific days will be required. *Man's efforts to appease God's wrath explains how worship will become a focal point for persecution*. The Bible predicts, "**All inhabitants of the earth will worship [obey] the beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.**" (Revelation

13:8, insertion and italics mine)

The Ten Commandments, especially the fourth commandment, will be constantly debated. The topic of worship will become very important. The 144,000 will present the holiness of God's seventh day Sabbath with clarity and compelling power. There is only one reason for rebelling against the fourth commandment. It is man's natural hostility toward God's authority. When the carnal nature is confronted with the demands of God's law, hostility is the result. 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)

Cain foolishly rationalized and assured himself that God would be pleased with his choices of fruit and vegetables (Genesis 4:3), but the Bible is clear, God was not pleased at all. God did not accept Cain's worship (Genesis 4:5) because He saw Cain's rebellion for what it was. Think about this: Why would anyone refuse to rest on God's holy Sabbath when God's prophets are teaching that God demands we rest from our labors on His holy day? God wrote the Ten Commandments in stone. They are inseparable and unchangeable. The Bible is not in conflict with itself. Paul wrote, **"For somewhere [in the Scripture, God] he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: 'And on the seventh day God rested from all his work'. . . . There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his."** (Hebrews 4:4,9,10)

During the Great Tribulation, God will test the inhabitants of Earth with His Sabbath rest test. Observing God's seventh day Sabbath will become a global test of faith when Babylon legislates other days for worship. Consider this parallel: God required ancient Israel to rest on His Sabbath before He delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Similarly, God will require mankind to rest on His Sabbath before He sets us free from the slavery of sin. There was persecution in ancient Egypt for resting on Sabbath and there will be persecution for everyone who defies Babylon's authority.

Incredible as it may seem, many people will fear Babylon's persecution more than God's seven bowls. However, the honest in heart will receive the gospel of Jesus and embrace the Creator's Sabbath. A large number of Moslems, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, Heathen, and Atheists will receive the gospel of Jesus Christ and rest on His Sabbath day once they understand who Jesus really is and what He

wants!

Summarizing Babylon's Persecution

Thus far, we have examined Babylon's persecution of the saints between the fourth and fifth trumpets. Here is a short summary:

1. Once it comes into power, Babylon will move quickly to appease God's wrath. The **first enabling lie** told by religious leaders is that everyone worships the *same* God even though He is called by different names. The **second enabling lie** is that God will be pleased with laws that outlaw sinful behavior. The **third enabling lie** will be Babylon's assertion that it has the authority to determine *when* God should be worshiped.
2. At first, Babylon's efforts to appease God will seem logical and appropriate to billions of people; however, the wheels will quickly fall off of the wagon after a few weeks because man's religious diversity will not permit a world of diverse religions to worship the *same* God in the *same* way. Babylon will consist of seven diverse religions and the worship of God will become an inconsistent and internally conflicted topic. Babylon's duplicity in appeasing God with laws regarding worship will undermine Babylon's lies. The honest in heart will see through Babylon's lies and embrace the gospel of Jesus.

The Gospel of Jesus Will Stall

The only people authorized to speak for Jesus during the Great Tribulation will be His servants, the 144,000. Jesus will not use churches, clergy, priests, imams, rabbis, pastors, or evangelists. The 144,000 will begin their work on the day the censer is cast down. Their first message is the first angel's message found in Revelation 14:6,7. **"Fear God – worship Him."** Later, when Babylon begins persecuting the saints, the 144,000 will give the second angel's message, **"Babylon is fallen."** (Revelation 14:8, KJV). Some of the 144,000 will speak before legislatures, parliaments, kings, prime ministers, dictators, and presidents. (Revelation 10:11) The 144,000 will explain the plan of salvation from the Bible, including the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, to young and old, rich and poor. They will present the love and sacrifice of Jesus and the terms and conditions of His gospel. They will boldly declare that Babylon is full of blasphemy and lies. In a word, the 144,000 will declare that **"Babylon is *fallen* [corrupt]."** (Revelation 14:8, KJV, insertion and italics mine)

The 144,000 will tell the world that contrary to Babylon's claim, everyone does not worship the *same* God. They will also inform the world that the God who has destroyed so much of the world is Jesus Christ, the Creator of the world. The 144,000 will tell parliaments and congresses that legislating worship and moral conduct **will not** appease God's wrath. If Jesus wanted moral legislation imposed on people, He would have imposed His Ten Commandments on mankind long ago. Jesus could have sent legions of angels with torturing devices if forced obedience was His objective. The 144,000 will tell world leaders that the last resort of false religion is force and contrary to what Babylon claims, Jesus will not accept coerced behavior as a substitute for repentance. Tortured confessions are unacceptable to a God of love. Jesus will only forgive our sins when we are truly sorry and willing to turn away from our sins. Jesus said, **"If you love me, you will obey what I command."** (John 14:15) Of course, this testimony will be rejected by those who believe the formation of Babylon is appropriate. Religious leaders will demand that politicians punish those "fools" who know nothing about God and are inciting and misleading others to offend God!

The 144,000 will plainly say, "The devastating judgments have stopped until the fifth trumpet occurs!" World leaders will not believe them. When fear and panic rule, people retreat to what they think is secure and this is why the whole world *follows* after the leopard-like beast. Everyone will be looking to their religious experts for direction and instruction. No politician will be willing to risk more of God's wrath by embracing the claims of 144,000 *nobodies*. The leaders of Babylon will argue and political leaders will agree that there is safety in numbers and remaining united *as one family* is the best way to appease one angry God.

After two years of persecution during the Great Tribulation, almost everyone on Earth will have decided whether or not he is willing to submit to the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the advance of the gospel ceases, the fifth trumpet occurs. Jesus will release Lucifer from the spirit realm where he has been confined. After he is released, the devil will physically appear before mankind masquerading as Almighty God. Paul calls the devil "the man of sin" (KJV) or "the man of lawlessness" (NIV) because the devil will not be subject to human laws. He will do as he pleases and no one will be able to stop him! As you read the following verses, notice that the devil is called a man and notice why the devil is permitted to physically appear before mankind:

"And then the lawless one [or, the man of sin] will be [physically]

revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one [masquerading as a righteous and holy God] will be in accordance [in perfect harmony] with the [cunning and deceptive] work of Satan [which will be] displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They [the wicked will] perish because they *refused* to love the truth and so be saved. [That is, the wicked heard the testimony of Jesus and refused His offer of salvation.] *For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion* [the devil masquerading as God] so that they will believe the lie [the delusion] and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.” (2 Thessa-lonians 2:8-12, italics and insertions mine)

God Releases a Destroyer

Before we examine the fifth trumpet, we need to discuss the full cup principle and God’s use of a “destroyer.” At the beginning of this study, we learned the full cup principle is a policy that God consistently uses to manage groups of people. When the majority of a group of people becomes so degenerate and defiant that extended mercy has no redeeming effect, God’s love for the innocent victims of sin, as well as oncoming generations, causes Him to respond to the decadence of the current generation. He sends warnings and redemptive judgments so that if possible, His wayward subjects will change course. If His warnings are ignored and **His redemptive** judgments do not produce repentance and reformation, God will send a **destroyer** to destroy the unrepentant. If the situation is not redeemable, He will send totally **destructive** judgments.

Sometimes, Jesus Himself is the destroyer. He destroyed the world in Noah’s day. (Genesis 6:7) Jesus destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. (Genesis 19:24) Jesus also killed the firstborn in Egypt. (Exodus 12:12) Centuries later, Israel ignored the warnings which God mercifully sent through Jeremiah. Notice Jeremiah’s words, “**For twenty-three years – from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah until this very day – the word of the Lord has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened. And though the Lord has sent all *his servants the prophets* to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention. . . . ‘But you did not listen to me,’ declares the Lord, ‘and you have provoked me with what your hands have**

made, and you have brought harm to yourselves.’” (Jeremiah 25:4,5, italics mine)

“Therefore the Lord Almighty says this: ‘Because you have not listened to my words, 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. I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.*’” (Jeremiah 25:8-11, italics mine)

Two important parallels can be applied to the Great Tribulation. First, there is a clear parallel between the work of Noah, Moses, Jeremiah, and the work of the 144,000. God warns people of His forthcoming actions through appointed messengers. Second, when Jesus saw that extended mercy did not produce change in ancient times, Jesus took action. He either imposed destruction on His rebellious subjects or He raised up a destroyer (as in Jeremiah’s case, King Nebuchadnezzar) to accomplish His will. The same thing will happen during the Great Tribulation. For 890 days, Jesus will grant everyone a chance to hear and receive His gospel and be saved. When it becomes clear to Jesus that extended mercy has no further redeeming effect, Jesus will release the devil (a destroyer) on the world. The devil will ultimately lead the wicked in a war to destroy Jesus at the Second Coming. Of course, the ultimate destroyer is Jesus. He will destroy His enemies with a command (represented as a sword that comes out of His mouth – Revelation 19:15-21) and return the devil to the Abyss. (Revelation 20:1-3) Just as Jesus released the king of *ancient* Babylon on Israel to bring Israel’s rebellion to an end, Jesus will release Lucifer, the king of *modern* Babylon to bring the world’s rebellion to an end.

Remember, the fifth trumpet does not occur until a majority of the wicked and the undecided have **refused** to accept the clearest evidences of truth. Paul wrote, “**They** [the wicked will] **perish because they** [heard the gospel of Jesus and] **refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion** [the physical appearing of the devil] **so that they will believe the lie.**” (2 Thessalonians 2:10,11, italics and insertions)

mine)

Three Groups of People

To appreciate the horrible torment described in the fifth trumpet, you need to understand that three groups of people live on Earth at any given time. These three groups will become clearly visible during the fifth trumpet. The first group consists of God's saints, the second group consists of people who appear to be religious, but they are wicked nonetheless. I call this group of people the religious wicked. The last group consists of people who will have nothing to do with religion. I call this group of people, the non-religious wicked.

As the Great Tribulation begins, almost everyone will reject the 144,000 and the testimony of Jesus. It is extremely difficult for people to relinquish their views about God – even when their views are proven erroneous. Even when people are convinced of a truth, there can be a great struggle to embrace it and publically defend it because the social consequences can be very severe. Many people will not be able to embrace the gospel of Jesus until the fifth trumpet because they cannot face the ridicule and persecution that will come from following Jesus. Jesus understands our dilemma and this is why He will put the devil and his evil work on public display. The devil and his angels will be allowed to physically appear so that human beings can clearly observe demons in action. Right now, we cannot see them, but this will change.

During the fifth trumpet, Lucifer's demons will torment one specific group of people. They will not harm the saints or those who embrace Lucifer as God, but they will target Lucifer's opposition (the non-religious wicked). When the world witnesses the horrible torture and suffering that demons will impose on people who refuse to worship Lucifer, an amazing thing will happen. Those in the non-religious group will either embrace the gospel of Jesus or they will join forces with the devil, claiming, "I believe he [Lucifer] is Almighty God!" The fifth trumpet will help push undecided people into the sheep pen or the goat pen.

Please consider the following on these three groups of people:

1. **The saints:** God's saints are in every nation, culture, religion, and language. These people are sincere and honest in heart. They love God even though their knowledge of Him is incomplete and largely erroneous. The saints listen to the Holy Spirit and through faith, obey His directives. The saints are conscientious. They strive to please God in all their actions. Because God's saints are found in all

religious groups, His saints do not agree among themselves very much. Theologically speaking, one could say that currently, most of God's saints are *honestly* opposed to each other because man's diversity in theology, culture, and language is substantial. Our diversity, however, is not a problem for God. God reads our motives and sees our hearts, even though our heads may be mixed up with all kinds of theories and ideas. Nevertheless, during the Great Tribulation, God's saints will hear the testimony of Jesus coming from the 144,000 and they will eventually embrace the gospel of Christ.

2. **The religious wicked:** The term, "religious wicked," may sound like a contradiction in terms, but it is not. There are wicked people in every religious system. The religious wicked are people who have made their religious system their God. They are more concerned with being right than doing right. These people are found in every religious body. Although they may appear to be deeply religious, they are not spiritual. These people have not been born again. They do not understand the love or the heart of God. Jesus said they will even commit murder, if necessary, to keep their religious system from failing. (John 16:1-3) Most of the Pharisees in Christ's day belonged to this group. Even though Saul was a Pharisee, he was not among the "religious wicked." Saul had the head of a Pharisee, but the heart of a saint! Jesus saw Saul's heart and this is why Saul was given an epiphany as he traveled to Damascus to persecute Christians. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:13, **"Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief."** Even though this group of people are wicked, Jesus knows there are some potential saints within this group.
3. **The non-religious wicked:** The title for the third group is self-explanatory. These people have no use for God. Generally speaking, these people are spiritually dead. Like the religious-wicked, they are controlled by the carnal nature. Nevertheless, there are some potential saints living within this group. The saints in this group are people who have honest hearts, but their heads are totally messed up. Jesus understands their misdirection and He has a plan that will extract the honest in heart from this group.

Now that you have been introduced to these three groups of people, you need to understand two things. First, Jesus has a plan for gathering the saints out of the last two groups, and second, He will bring His saints

into one accord! After the devastation of the first four trumpets has opened the ears of billions of people, the 144,000 will deliver the testimony of Jesus to the world. The first four trumpets will put the people of Earth in a very difficult situation in terms of survival, but the gospel of Jesus will put the people of Earth in a very difficult situation in terms of doing God's will. These extremities will separate the sheep from the goats. The sheep will follow Jesus by faith. They will pay the price of discipleship. By the time the seventh trumpet sounds, only two groups of people will be left. The saints will be worshiping the Lamb (Jesus) and the religious wicked will be worshiping the lamb-like beast (Lucifer). The devil's demons will eliminate the non-religious wicked group through torture in the fifth trumpet and death in the sixth trumpet.

The Fifth Trumpet

“The fifth angel sounded his trumpet [in Heaven’s temple], and I [John] saw a [an angelic] star that had fallen from the sky to the earth.” (Isaiah 14:12, insertions mine)

Lucifer was the first and highest being of creation. Over time, Lucifer became jealous of Christ and later, he openly rebelled against Christ's authority. Lucifer became “anti”-Christ. Lucifer infected a third of the angels with his hatred for Jesus and eventually, God cast them out of Heaven. Evidently, they were expelled from Heaven the first time before Earth was created. (Isaiah 14:12-17) God allowed Lucifer and his angels to roam the universe and this is how Lucifer came to planet Earth where he succeeded in causing Eve and Adam to sin.

When Adam and Eve sinned, Lucifer became the prince of this world. Lucifer is the father of lies and of all beings who have fallen natures. Because Lucifer was the prince of this fallen world, he was allowed to meet with God and other angels at various times for administrative purposes. (See Job 1) Four thousand years after sin began, Jesus paid the penalty for sin by dying on the cross. With His blood, Jesus *redeemed* Earth from Lucifer's dominion and possession. On Resurrection Sunday, Jesus ascended to Heaven to receive possession of Earth, but Lucifer would not relinquish his ownership of Earth to Jesus, so there was a second war in Heaven. (Revelation 12:7) Once again, Jesus and His angels cast Lucifer and his angels out of Heaven. Ever since their expulsion, Lucifer and his angels have been confined to Earth. They are forced to live in the spirit realm and although they are unseen, they freely travel about Earth. This captivity will change at the fifth trumpet. **“The [angelic] star [Lucifer] was given the key to**

the [gate that seals the] **shaft of the Abyss.**” (Revelation 9:1, insertions mine)

In John’s day, the Jews regarded the *abussos* (the Abyss) as a deep, dark dungeon for spirits. The Abyss was a geographical space that existed somewhere under the basin of Earth. Volcanoes were believed to be chimneys for the endless fires that burned under the basin of Earth. Remember, people in John’s day thought Earth was flat and they thought the “bottomless pit” was a shaft that went through the flat Earth. God cast Lucifer and his demons into the Abyss on Resurrection Sunday and according to Revelation 9:1, they will come out of the Abyss when the fifth trumpet occurs. Lucifer will be given the key, and he and his angels will exit the spirit realm and become plainly visible to all human beings.

“When he [Lucifer] opened the Abyss, [demons ascended from the Abyss into the sky and there were so many of them that they looked like a dense cloud of smoke and the] **smoke rose from it [the Abyss] like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss.** (Revelation 9:2, insertions mine)

“And out of the smoke locusts *came down upon the earth* [Notice they came down from the sky, and at a distance, the demons looked like a dense cloud of smoke to John. Their appearing darkened the sun and sky! As they drew closer, the demons looked something like large locusts with wings as they *came down* upon Earth.] **and [these demons] were given power like that of scorpions of the earth** [That is, they had the ability to inflict searing pain on human beings]. (Revelation 9:3, italics and insertions mine)

“They were told [by Jesus] not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree [The demons cannot destroy anything at this time.], **but [they can “sting”] only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.**” (Revelation 9:4, insertions mine) In other words, the devil and his angels cannot hurt the 144,000 and those saints who were sealed during the 890 days prior to the fifth trumpet. Of course, the devil and his demons will not hurt those people who immediately believe that he is Almighty God. The devil and his demons will torture the non-religious wicked group – those who reject the gospel of Jesus and stand in opposition to the devil’s blasphemous claims. The non-religious group will consist of people like scientists, communists, agnostics, and the devil will painfully torment them. This painful intimidation will cause many to give in to Lucifer’s demands and they will

offer a *forced* confession, “Yes, I believe this glorious being is Almighty God and I will obey his commands.”

“They [the demons] were not given power to kill them [those in the non-religious wicked group], 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 [awful, searing pain]. (Revelation 9:5, insertions mine)

“During those days [wicked] men [and women] will seek death, but will not find it; [the pain will be so great] they will long to die, but death will elude them. (Revelation 9:6)

“The locusts [the devil’s angels also] looked like horses [and armed riders] prepared for battle. On their heads they [the demons] wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces.” (Revelation 9:7, insertions mine) Angels, also created in God’s image, resemble human beings in appearance. The crowns of gold reflect their high positions as angels of the false god. (The Greek word used here for crown is *stephanos* and it means crowns of honor, victory.) The devil and his angels will be part of the great delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:11) which God will release upon the world because the wicked will have refused to love the truth and be saved. This deception will be so great that it would deceive the very elect, if that were possible. (Matthew 24:24) Lucifer and his angels may stand about fifteen feet tall (1 Kings 6:26, 2 Chronicles 3:10-13), so they will be very intimidating and most impressive. Those not having the seal of God will be totally overwhelmed.

“Their hair was [long and beautiful] like women’s hair, and their teeth were [strong and deadly, designed to tear flesh] like lions’ teeth. (Revelation 9:8, insertions mine)

“They had breastplates like breastplates of iron [nothing manmade could penetrate them or hurt them], and the sound of their wings [when they fly] was [powerful and fearful] like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. (Revelation 9:9, insertions mine)

“[Because God can speak volumes with caricatures, Lucifer’s demons appeared as though] They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months.” (Revelation 9:10, insertion mine)

When Lucifer and his angels are released from the Abyss, their

appearance will be beautiful and stunning. *They will not look like grasshoppers or horses.* God represented Lucifer and his angels to John with caricatures so that the final generation might understand the work and character of these demons with very few words. Remember, scribes copied the book of Revelation by hand for 1,900 years and a picture is worth 1,000 words. For example, in Revelation 19:15, John saw a sword coming out of the mouth of Jesus. This sword represents a deadly command that will come out of Jesus' mouth at the Second Coming. Jesus will slay the wicked by a command! (Revelation 2:12,16; 19:21)

“They [the demons] had as king over them *the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.*” (Revelation 9:11, italics and insertion mine) Both names mean the same thing: “Destroyer.” Lucifer receives a Hebrew name and a Greek name because he will destroy many saints (when the fifth seal opens) and many wicked (during the sixth trumpet). In other words, the devil will be a great destroyer.

“The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.” (Revelation 9:12) At the end of five months, the fifth trumpet is over. The sixth and seventh trumpets are coming and they will be even worse!

Fifth Trumpet: A Really Big Show

The devil will have to imitate the Second Coming of Jesus a number of times. Unlike the global appearing of the real Jesus who will remain in the sky for everyone to see, the devil's appearing will be a series of local events. For example, Lucifer and his angels could descend from the sky over Houston, later they could descend out of the sky at Dallas, then Los Angeles, Mexico City, Paris and the other great cities of Earth. Jesus confirms the local nature of Lucifer's appearing. He said, **“At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. . . . So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. 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 24:23,26,27)

John wrote, **“Look, he [Jesus] 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, insertion and italics mine) When Jesus comes, He will

not touch the Earth. This explains why the saints will meet Him in the air! **“After that [the resurrection of the righteous dead], we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”** (1 Thessalonians 4:17) Jesus said where the saints will go. **“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there [to the New Jerusalem] to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”** (John 14:2,3)

The Bible indicates the fifth trumpet will last for five months. The devil will speak kind words, perform wonderful miracles of healing, feed the multitudes, and offer inspiring words of hope to a world in utter despair. He will show great signs and wonders. He will be glorious and lovely to look upon. He will captivate and motivate people toward hope, assuring them that a thousand years of peace and joy is coming. The kingdom of God has come! He will call for renewed efforts to make the world a better place to live. Meanwhile, some of his demons will be working night and day to subdue Lucifer’s opposition. The non-religious wicked group will suffer the horrible “sting” of Lucifer’s scorpions. When family members and observers see the horrible searing pain that comes from one demon, many in the non-religious wicked group will capitulate on the spot. I can see how demons could tauntingly use this Scripture: **“. . . If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”** (Romans 10:9) Of course, the Jesus promoted by Lucifer’s demons is the devil, an imposter of the real Jesus.

Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, John, and Paul Agree

Shortly before Paul’s death, Jesus revealed to him that Lucifer would someday physically appear on Earth. Notice Paul’s understanding of this matter: **“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day [the Second Coming of Jesus] *will not* come until *the rebellion occurs* [a worldwide rejection of the gospel. Paul knew that the gospel of Jesus would be presented to everyone on Earth before Jesus would return. “The rebellion” that has to happen before Jesus can**

return will occur during the Great Tribulation. The world must first hear the gospel and refuse to submit to its terms and conditions before Jesus can return. This great rebellion will cause the work of the 144,000 to stall. When the gospel cannot make any forward progress, Jesus will release the devil from the Abyss] **and the *man of lawlessness is revealed, the *man* doomed to destruction.***"

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, insertions and italics mine)

Lucifer Is Called a Man

Lucifer is called a *man* in 2 Thessalonians 2, Isaiah 14:16,17, and Ezekiel 28:2 for two reasons. First, God will give Lucifer a body that looks something like the form of a man. Currently, Lucifer has no body. (Revelation 17:8) He is locked in the spirit realm. Just as Jesus was given a body (Hebrews 10:5) to save mankind, Lucifer and his angels will be given bodies as part of their mission to destroy mankind.

Second, Lucifer is called a man because he is a mortal being, that is, he is subject to death just like mankind. The coming Antichrist is a man, but not a man born of a woman, or having an earthly origin. Even though the devil has lived for thousands of years, he will be annihilated with fire at the end of the 1,000 years, just like the rest of the wicked. (Revelation 20:9,10)

Isaiah saw Lucifer cast out of Heaven and given the form of a man!

"How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are [a mortal] brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: 'Is this *the man* who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, *the man* who made the world a desert, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?' " (Isaiah 14:12-17, italics and insertion mine)

Daniel knew the Antichrist would be a man, but not a man of earthly origin. He wrote, **"Out of one of them [the four winds] came another horn [the king from the north], which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land. . . . In the latter part of their reign [that is, the reign of Earth's kings], when *rebels* [against the gospel] have become**

completely wicked, a stern-faced [angel] king, a master of intrigue, will arise [from out of nowhere, the Abyss]. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior [above everything that is called God]. When they feel secure [with his deceptions], he will destroy many [people at the sixth trumpet] and take his stand against [Jesus] the [real] Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.” (Daniel 8:9,23-25, insertions and italics mine)

Paul continues, **“He [the man of lawlessness, the devil] will oppose [the teachings of all religions] and will exalt himself over [and above] everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things?”** (1 Thessalonians 2:4,5, insertions mine.)

Contrary to what many people think, Paul is not talking about the devil sitting in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. The temple the Romans destroyed in A.D. 70 cannot be rebuilt because God has established a new covenant. He abandoned the nation of Israel (Matthew 23:38) and put a seal on the temple mount to prevent the temple from being rebuilt. This seal is a Moslem mosque, “The Dome of the Rock.” Furthermore, Paul says the devil *will oppose* everything that is called “God or is worshiped” as God. This means the devil will blaspheme Judaism and all religions. In fact, Lucifer will destroy all of the world’s religions when he sets up his theocracy during the sixth trumpet. Paul’s phrase, “he sets himself up in God’s temple proclaiming himself to be God,” means the devil will usurp God’s place and authority over Earth. The devil will exalt himself over everything that is called God so that he can rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. Isaiah affirms this point: **“You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”** (Isaiah 14:13,14)

Paul continues: **“And now you know what is holding him [the devil] back, so that he may be revealed *at the proper time* [fifth trumpet]. For the secret [unseen and hidden] power of lawlessness [even though he is invisible or hidden, the devil] is already at work; but**

the one who now holds it back [Jesus is currently holding back the appearing of the devil.] **will continue to do so till he** [Jesus] **is taken out of the way.** [When the corporate intercession of Jesus is taken out of the way, there is nothing to stop the wrath of God.] **And then** [during the fifth trumpet] **the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his** [Second] **coming. The coming of the lawless one** [his appearing] **will be in accordance with the work of Satan** [even though the devil will give the appearance of Almighty God, his actions will betray his charade. The devil will convince the world of his assumed divinity by performing miracles, manifesting incredible powers] **displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They** [the wicked] **perish because they** [heard the gospel and] **refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion** [an invincible destroyer] **so that they will believe the lie** [that Lucifer is God] **and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”**

(2 Thessalonians 2:6-12, insertions and italics mine)

God gave Isaiah, Ezekiel, John, Daniel, and Paul slightly different views of the devil's work and appearing. Isaiah saw Lucifer cast out of Heaven and given the form of a man! Ezekiel saw a man claiming to be God. Daniel was shown “a stern faced king” who will come out of the north and destroy the mighty men and the holy people. Paul was shown “a lawless man,” and John was shown “the angel king from the Abyss.” When we align these views, we discover that God has provided a powerful matrix revealing several things about Lucifer that cannot be explained with just a few words! Consider the following verses and notice how the wicked will be surprised at his appearing!

“[The angel said to me, ‘John,] **The** [great red dragon] **beast, which you saw** [cast out of Heaven in Revelation 12:7-9], **once was** [in Heaven], **now is not** [in Heaven because he was cast into the Abyss], **and** [at the appointed time, he will be released and] **will come up out of the Abyss** [the spirit realm where he has been confined] **and** [after a great display of authority and power for 445 days he will] **go to his destruction. 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** [actually] **see the** [great red dragon] **beast, because he once was** [visible as a glorious angel in

Heaven], **now** [he is confined to the Abyss and] **is not** [visible to human beings], **and yet** [during the fifth trumpet, he] **will** [be permitted to] **come** [out of hiding and masquerade as Almighty God. He will astonish the wicked with incredible glory, counterfeit wonders, and miracles!]. **The** [great red dragon] **beast who once was** [in Heaven], **and now is not** [in Heaven], **is an eighth king.** [The devil is called an eighth king because he will rule over the seven heads just like the eighth horn ruled over the seven horns in Daniel 7.] **He** [the great red dragon] **belongs to the seven** [heads because he is blasphemous. He opposes God's authority and truth. The great red dragon is the dreaded Antichrist] **and** [even though he will appear to be invincible for awhile, you can be sure that he] **is going to his destruction."** (Revelation 17:8,11, insertions mine)

To put it simply, the devil will be released from the Abyss because the gospel has stalled. Jesus releases a destroyer so that people can make up their minds about good and evil. Once Lucifer is released, the devil will move quickly to establish control over the world and his evil actions will force many undecided people into a decision. If counterfeit miracles cannot budge a hardened heart, then the searing pain imposed by Lucifer's demons will. Many people will make up their minds when they are confronted with Lucifer's demands. Even still, a few hard-headed people will remain in the valley of decision, but the sixth trumpet will force everyone into their "final decision."

Abrupt Change

During the five months of the fifth trumpet, the devil will steadily gain a following of believers through deception. World leaders will be delighted that "Almighty God" is on their side, but a problem will soon arise. How is religious diversity possible when "God" dwells among men? How can Jews, Muslims, Christians, and Hindus defend opposing views of God when "God" Himself lives among men? How can nations remain sovereign when "God" is sovereign over all nations?

At the end of the fifth trumpet, the devil will abruptly change his tactics and demeanor. He will become a "stern-faced" dictator. He will make *horrible demands and mankind will be powerless to resist or stop him.* There will be no law except the law of this demon. Whatever the devil wants and whatever the devil commands will be the law. (Hence the descriptive term used by Paul, "the man of lawlessness.") The devil will demand an end to religious diversity and his command will be carried

out. He will demand that a theocracy be established and his command will be honored. (A theocracy is a church-state government where God rules as King of kings and Lord of lords.) For reasons beyond the scope of this study, I also believe Lucifer will change the weekly cycle to ten days and establish every tenth day as *the* day for worship. Because he will be “King of kings and Lord of lords,” who can resist anything he wants or says? Resistance to Lucifer’s demands will be silenced by Lucifer’s demons. “. . . **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)

Lucifer’s theocratic government will be established during the sixth trumpet. This government is called “an image to the beast” in Revelation. Notice how the image (or a likeness) of Babylon will be set up: “**Because of the signs he [Lucifer] was given power to do on behalf of the first beast [the leopard-like beast, Babylon], he [Lucifer] *deceived* the inhabitants of the earth.** [When the five months allotted to the fifth trumpet ended] **He *ordered* them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded [in the head] by the sword and yet lived.**” (Revelation 13:14, italics and insertions mine)

Using the guise of admiration for a job well done, the devil will *honor* Babylon’s efforts to establish a church-state, but he will insist on modifying Babylon at the end of the fifth trumpet. Lucifer will move to eliminate the confusion that diverse religions create by simply abolishing the diverse religions of the world. He will claim that then, and only then, will there be “one lord, one faith, one baptism” instead of seven opposing religions trying to appease one God in different ways.

The devil will dethrone the pope. The devil will outlaw the practice of any former religion. Consider the importance of this process. During the sixth trumpet, the wicked will be *forced* to abandon their original religious beliefs. Prior to the sixth trumpet, God’s children *chose* to abandon their original beliefs because they loved truth! Those embracing the gospel of Jesus will not be able to remain in their former churches once they begin worshiping Jesus on His Sabbath day. Meanwhile, those hanging on to their churches because they are afraid to make a change will wake up and discover that their church and their religion have not only been abolished, but they have been outlawed! The valley of decision has just ended. Now, everyone will have to join the church of Satan or the church of God.

Think about this: When the masquerading “God” lives among mankind, there will be no room for religious diversity. Lucifer’s theocracy is described as “the great whore” in Revelation 17 because everyone joining Lucifer’s church will have to prostitute their souls for survival. The situation will be dire and all wiggle room will be gone. During these developments of the sixth trumpet, Jesus will send a final message to those in Babylon who are still undecided: **“Come out of her [the great whore, the theocratic government set up by Lucifer], my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.”** (Revelation 18:4,5, insertion mine)

The Sixth Trumpet

Masquerading as the Savior of the world, Lucifer will abruptly take control of Earth at the end of the fifth trumpet. He will announce that as “King of kings and Lord of lords,” the time has come to set up the “kingdom of God” on Earth. Anyone resisting will be killed. Lucifer’s demons will be allowed to kill one-third of mankind. These demons will conduct a simple loyalty test and everyone refusing to accept the mark of the beast will be killed. The devil will demand that everyone wear a tattoo; this mark (Greek: *charagma*: an engraving, a tattoo) will be the number 666 tattooed on each person’s right hand. Every business transaction will require verification, that is, the tattoo must be shown. The devil will impose many harsh demands on mankind and all who refuse to worship and obey this evil “God” are to be killed.

“The sixth angel sounded his trumpet [in Heaven’s temple], and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God.” (Revelation 9:13, insertion mine) The golden altar before the throne is the Altar of Incense, the same altar from which the censer was cast down at the beginning of the seven trumpets. (Revelation 8:5) John heard the four horns speak. Of course, the horns do not literally speak, but they are personified as speaking for a good reason.

“It [the voice coming out of the four horns] said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’” (Revelation 9:14, insertion mine) The four horns on the Altar of Incense played an important role in the earthly temple service. Israel’s corporate guilt was transferred to the four horns each evening and morning via the blood of the evening and morning sacrifices. (Exodus 29:38-44)

Other than Leviticus 4, which clearly indicates that blood was applied to the horns of the Altar of Incense, there is no textual evidence explicitly stating that blood was applied to the horns of the Altar of Incense each evening and morning. I conclude that blood from the evening and morning sacrifices was applied to the horns for three reasons. First, there is no atonement for sin without the shedding of blood. (Hebrews 9:22) This is true for corporate sin as well as individual sin. (Leviticus 4) Second, the Altar of Incense had four horns just like the Altar of Burnt Offering. (Exodus 37:25, 38:2) These horns were a repository for the record of guilt. In other words, corporate sin was transferred via the blood to the corporate altar. (Leviticus 9:7-12) Third, the Altar of Incense had to be cleansed of guilt on the Day of Atonement because the altar was defiled by the presence of guilt. (Leviticus 16:18) When these facts are aligned, personifying the horns on the Altar of Incense so that they can speak makes sense. The horns represent justice and mercy. The voice says, "Remove the barrier and let the Destroyer destroy."

50/50

The four angels bound at the river in Revelation 9:14 are Lucifer's demons, poised and ready to kill a third of mankind. When the appointed hour, day, month, and year arrives, the sixth trumpet will sound and these demons will be released. They will kill millions of saints (remember, God has predetermined the exact number of martyrs He will allow to perish – Revelation 6:11), and whoever remains in the non-religious wicked group will also be killed.

The language in Revelation 9:14 parallels the language in Revelation 7:1-4 where the four angels were told to wait until the 144,000 were sealed. Ironically, God's four angels and Lucifer's four angels will kill the *same* number of people! Consider the math:

Let us assume the population of the world will be 7 billion people when the censer is cast down. We know that twenty-five percent of the world will be destroyed when the fourth seal is broken and the first four trumpets occur. So, God's four angels will kill 1.75 billion people. Subtracting 1.75 billion dead people from a total of 7 billion leaves 5.25 billion people alive. At the sixth trumpet, Lucifer's four angels will kill a third of mankind. A third of 5.25 billion is another 1.75 billion people! The numbers indicate two things. First, in the battle for souls, Jesus and Lucifer are permitted to kill the *same* number of people. One kills out of the full cup principle; the other kills because his authority is

questioned. Second, the population of Earth will be reduced by fifty percent by the end of the sixth trumpet! This is actually merciful given the extremity of those days.

The Great River Euphrates

The release of the four angels *bound* at the great river Euphrates means that the devil is clearly limited by Christ's higher authority. Jesus limits the devil's destruction to one-third of mankind. Have you ever wondered why the great river Euphrates is used in this passage? Actually, the imagery is simple. The great river Euphrates formed Israel's northern boundary in ancient times. The great river was a *natural barrier*, keeping advancing armies from the north out of Israel's northern territory. When the sixth trumpet sounds, the barrier that has been protecting the world from Lucifer's destruction will be removed and Lucifer's four angels will be released to sweep down "out of the north" to destroy their limit without impediment. (Daniel 11:40)

"And the four angels [four demons] who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind [the timing of the sixth trumpet was determined long ago]. (Revelation 9:15, insertions mine)

"The number of the mounted troops [the demons were represented to John as riders on horses] was two hundred million. I heard their number. (Revelation 9:16, insertion mine)

"The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury." (Revelation 9:17-19)
This caricature of Lucifer's demons indicates there is no escape for mankind. No human army can defeat this foe. Lucifer and his demons will take control of the world away from mankind, and men will be powerless to stop them.

"The rest of mankind [the two-thirds] that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood – idols that cannot see or hear or walk.

Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.” (Revelation 9:20-21, insertion mine)

Jesus holds the door to salvation open during the sixth trumpet, and 144,000 servants bravely give the final call, “Come out of her my people.” Even though the wicked see the despicable behavior of Lucifer and his demons killing a third of mankind, one would think that some people would repent. But, they do not. Like Pharaoh’s heart, their hearts have become hardened. They have committed the unpardonable sin and they stubbornly insist on maintaining their hostility toward Jesus and His demands. The establishment of Lucifer’s theocracy and the slaughter of one-third of mankind *forces* everyone to either surrender to Jesus or pass the point of no return. Everyone who rejects the final gospel invitation will commit the unpardonable sin. Jesus does not close the door to salvation on a single soul. Instead, everyone will make his own choice, and when the last individual on Earth makes his choice, Jesus terminates His offer of salvation! When the Two Witnesses complete their work at the end of 1,260 days, six trumpet judgments will have occurred and every survivor will be found worshiping the devil (the lamb-like beast) or worshiping Jesus (the Lamb).

Additional Thoughts

Before we close this segment on the sixth trumpet, here are five issues for your consideration:

1. After the devil is released from the Abyss in the fifth trumpet, honest hearted people will see and understand the true character of evil. Currently, few people understand the demonic rage and cunning sophistry of Lucifer, but this will change. The world will get to see a glorious being who is committed to evil and destruction without reservation. When people observe the torture and murder that Lucifer and his angels inflict on human beings during the fifth and sixth trumpets, some of the wicked will repent of their rebellion. *Lucifer’s actions are a mirror. Any sinner would do as Lucifer does if given the opportunity because sin is just as predictable as love!* God has allowed Lucifer and his angels to live for thousands of years to demonstrate this amazing truth. Any departure from righteousness, no matter who leads the rebellion, produces the same result. During the Great Tribulation, God wants the world and the universe to see that sin is everything that He is not. The Holy Spirit will do everything short of violating a person’s free will to bring a person into God’s love, because in Christ there is

love, freedom, and joy. His “yoke is easy and His burden is light.” (Matthew 11:30)

2. The “religious wicked” group will be in for a devastating shock when Lucifer suddenly outlaws all of the religions of Earth. Religion and culture deeply permeate our thoughts and behavior, and it is almost impossible for a religious person to relinquish his cherished beliefs! When the devil establishes his theocracy, he will necessarily abolish all of the religions of the world. There will be one lord, one faith, and one baptism. Now, the “religious wicked” will face a conundrum. They will have no religious authority other than Lucifer! There will be no pope, no Mohammed, no Bible, no Koran, no Dali Lama, no sacred writings, and no other religious authority. Whom will the “religious wicked” now worship? This sudden vacuum will cause some people to reconsider the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. The Bible predicts the devil will force the mark of the beast on the inhabitants of Earth: **“He [the lamb-like beast] also forced [remember, force is the last resort of false religion] everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark [the Greek word for “mark” is *charagma*¹, which means “an etching or engraving”] on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is (1) the name of the beast or (2) the number of [belonging to] his name.”** (Revelation 13:16,17, insertions mine) Multitudes of people will compromise and comply fully knowing that they are receiving the mark of the beast. They will make this decision because they are either rebellious toward God or they are cowards. Notice what the Bible says about cowards: **“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)

Here is a possible scenario. When Lucifer abolishes the religious systems of the world, he will establish ten kings. These kings will do whatever the devil wants. (Revelation 17:13) To enhance his

¹ This etching will be a non-removable, non-transferrable tattoo on the right hand. A tattoo is a *charagma*. A story that runs parallel to the mark of the beast is told in Ezekiel 9. Although this story did not actually take place, the concept of separating people according to a mark (etching) was presented to Ezekiel in a vision.

control, I believe the devil will divide the people of Earth into groups of 1,000 with one person from each group of 1,000 chosen as their leader. This leader will report to his respective king leaving 999 people in each group. The devil will tell the world that 666 people in each group will be permitted to live and participate in his theocracy. Therefore, anyone wishing to avoid death must come forward by a specified date. This person must swear allegiance and loyalty to the devil and his government. To signify his fealty, the individual will then receive a tattoo on his right hand showing the number 666. This tattoo will clearly separate Lucifer's opposition from those people willing to serve as devoted subjects. The good news for Earth's survivors (if there is any good news) is that two-thirds of each group will be spared! This decree will quickly force the wicked to make their final decision. Many people will rush in to receive the tattoo because they know that each group will be limited to 666 survivors. This process explains why Lucifer's theocracy is called "the great whore" in Revelation 17. When people willfully and knowingly worship the devil in order to survive, they have sold their souls to the devil.

Those who refuse the mark of the beast will become targets for murder. Millions of saints will be slaughtered. (Revelation 6:9-11; 16:6; 17:6) Most if not all of the 144,000 will perish. Even in the non-religious group, millions will be killed and if Lucifer deems it necessary, even those who willingly worship the devil will be killed. The devil is a sociopath. He loves no one. Only 666 will be allowed to live, the rest will be killed as quickly as the devil's minions can find them. Jesus said, **"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"** (Matthew 16:25,26)

The tattoo on the forehead is easy to understand. It is a simple counterfeit. The Bible says the names of Jesus and the Father will be *engraved* on the foreheads of the 144,000! (See Revelation 14:1, 22:4) This glorious insignia on their foreheads will indicate their high rank wherever they travel throughout eternity. In his attempt to denigrate all that God plans for good, Lucifer will counterfeit this insignia by putting his name, in the form of an engraving (a tattoo) on the forehead of his lieutenant in each group.

Lucifer's assumed name (unknown at this time) will not be numerically equivalent to 666. The Bible does not indicate or require a Roman numeral translation. Rather, the Bible indicates the number 666 is the "number [of people] *belonging* to the man [of sin]." The Greek syntax puts this phrase in a genitive of *possession* case, that is, 666 people will belong to Lucifer. Look again at these verses: **"He [the lamb-like beast] also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark [Greek: *charagma* – an etching, an engraving, a tattoo] on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the [visible tattoo] mark [to show everyone], which is (a) the [assumed] name of the beast [tattooed on the forehead] or (b) the number [of people who belong to] of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate [count] the number of [people belonging to] the beast, for it is [the] man's number [that is, the number belonging to the man of sin]. His number [of remaining people] is 666."** (Revelation 13:16-18, italics and insertions mine)

4. I believe the devil will change the weekly cycle so that God's seventh day Sabbath will move through the weekly cycle. In other words, suppose every tenth day is Lucifer's holy day. The effect would be twofold. First, there would be less rest for everyone building up "the kingdom of God." Exhaustion would be consistent with Lucifer's demonic drive to destroy the people of Earth. Second, and more importantly, a change in the weekly cycle would make God's seventh-day Sabbath fall at different times and anyone resting *during* the work week would be easily spotted and killed.
5. The destroyer will arrive with the intent of destroying everyone on Earth (even those who adore him) and he would quickly do so if he could, but Jesus holds him back for several reasons. One reason is restitution and vengeance. Jesus keeps a large number of the wicked alive so that He can deal with them during the seven bowls. Jesus will reward the wicked with suffering according to the suffering they impose on His children! **"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)

The Seventh Trumpet

On the 1,265th day of the Great Tribulation (a Sunday?), I believe God will gather up all of the 144,000 and take them to Heaven. The 144,000 will be presented to Jesus as the first fruits of a coming harvest, a

numberless multitude of people who chose Jesus as Lord and Master *during* the Great Tribulation. Once the 144,000 are safely gathered around the throne, the seventh trumpet will sound in Heaven.

“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: [The intercession of Jesus on behalf of individuals is completed. His work as High Priest has ended. The kingdom of God is complete. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords.] **‘The world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he** [Christ, will overthrow Lucifer and destroy sin and all who love it.] **will reign for ever and ever.’** (Revelation 11:15, insertions mine)

“And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have [redeemed everyone who loves truth] **taken your great power and have begun to reign** [over the Earth].” (Revelation 11:16-17, insertions mine) This trumpet marks the beginning of seventy days of destruction when Lucifer’s masquerade, his theocracy, and his followers are destroyed. Ultimately, Earth’s civilization itself is destroyed.

“The nations were angry [at Lucifer’s unbearable demands]; **and** [the time for] **your** [totally destructive – seven bowls of] **wrath has come. The time has come for judging** [avenging] **the dead** [who stood firmly for the testimony of Jesus and the Word of God. The time has come to extract restitution from those who hurt them], **and for rewarding your servants the prophets** [the 144,000] **and your saints and** [all] **those who reverence your name, both small and great – and** [the time has come] **for destroying those who destroy the earth** [Lucifer and his demons]. (Revelation 11:18, insertions mine)

“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened [to the view of everyone on Earth so that everyone could actually see God’s covenant], **and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant** [which contains the Ten Commandments]. **And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great** [destructive] **hailstorm.”** (Revelation 11:19, insertions mine)

The End of Salvation

The seventh trumpet is the third and final curse. This trumpet marks the end of mercy and the commencement of the seven last plagues. The

seventh trumpet is a global notification that God's mercy for sinners has ended. There is no further possibility for salvation. For 1,260 days, the 144,000 faithfully extended Christ's offer of salvation to every man, woman, and child. Every person has made his or her decision. Many people will wear the mark of the beast and Jesus will seal the others. Can you imagine the amazement of Heaven's angels as they witness the stubborn rebellion of sinners? Who can intelligently refuse the gift of eternal life from a God of love? I can understand why an angel says, **"Who will not fear you, O Lord [Most High God], and bring glory to your [wonderful and awesome] name? For you alone are holy [the Ruler and Creator of Heaven and Earth]. All nations will come and worship before you [out of love], for your righteous acts have been revealed."** (Revelation 15:4, insertions mine)

The Ark of the Covenant

One dramatic aspect of the seventh trumpet is the awesome display of the Ark of the Covenant. To understand the significance of this event, a few words about the Ten Commandments are necessary.

The Ten Commandments were kept inside the Ark of the Covenant and this made the Ark of the Covenant the holiest article of furniture within the earthly temple. The Ark was *never* exposed for people to see. Even when the nation of Israel traveled about, the Ark of the Covenant was covered with the veil that separated the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. (Numbers 4:5) Even more, the Israelites remained about a half mile away from the Ark whenever the Levites carried it from place to place. (Joshua 3:4) The Ark of the Covenant was the holiest of all objects because it contained "the covenant." The Ark was *never visible* except to the High Priest who cautiously entered the Most Holy Place once a year to stand before it on the Day of Atonement. (Leviticus 16:13)

God kept the Ark hidden from view for a good reason. He did not want Israel to worship two tablets of stone. God foreknew that Israel, like the nations of the world, had a proclivity for idolatry – worshipping sacred objects such as golden calves, idols, Asherah poles, and the starry hosts. So, God hid "the covenant" from sight because the Ten Commandments are not to be worshiped. In fact, the second commandment forbids the worship or veneration of any object!

God made the Ark of the Covenant holy because His perfect law is His constitution. A God of love is a God of law and order. His law is love and His order is humility and service. He uses His magnificent powers

– omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence – to ensure that His unchangeable constitution will survive throughout eternity. He wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of enduring stone. The first tablet contains four commandments. They describe man’s responsibility to God. The second tablet contains six commandments. They describe man’s responsibility to his neighbor. In total, these two tablets are a declaration of what people will *naturally do* when the carnal nature has been subdued by God’s love! The Ten Commandments are *prophetic* in this sense. When a person loves God, he will naturally want to do what the first four commandments require. Likewise, when a person loves his neighbor, he would not think of sinning against his neighbor. Therefore, the law’s prediction is fulfilled through love.

The Ten Commandments were also kept out of sight because God’s law is not an external matter. God wants His laws written on the “tablets of our heart,” not on our shirt sleeve. The carnal nature loves attention. It likes to show off. It quickly absorbs pride and arrogance because our carnal hearts are selfish and self-seeking. In short, the carnal heart is everything that God is not. God is not impressed with a show of external piety, but He is impressed with modesty. Jesus said, **“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.”** (Matthew 6:5-7) An infinitely wise God kept the Ten Commandments out of sight because (a) God knows that carnal minded people cannot understand His law because it is spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14), and (b) God knows that the best way to present His law to carnal minded people is through the loving words and actions of His people. Of course, God also knows that a legalist can make His law repugnant in the eyes of those who do not understand it. (Remember the disgusting ways of the Pharisees?)

The Testimony

The Ten Commandments are sometimes called “The Testimony” in the Old Testament. Five times in Scripture, the earthly temple is called the “Tent of the Testimony,” and thirteen times, the Ark is called the “Ark of the Testimony.” The Ten Commandments are called “The Testimony” because they are the written testimony of Jesus Himself.

“When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of *the Testimony*, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.” (Exodus 31:18, italics mine) It is important to note that Jesus did not give the Ten Commandments to Moses so that Moses could write them down. I mention this difference because the Ark of the Covenant is not an article of furniture that belonged to Israel. The covenant made with Israel is separate from the Ten Commandments. The timeless Ten Commandments are not to be confused with the temporary laws given to Moses. Those laws were nailed to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-17)

The Ten Commandments are also called “The Covenant” and this explains why the golden box containing the Ten Commandments is called “The Ark of *The Covenant*” or “The Ark of His Covenant” more than thirty times in the Bible. **“Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of *the covenant* – the Ten Commandments.”** (Exodus 34:28, italics mine) When a person considers all of the documents ever written, the Ten Commandments are unlike anything else. God wrote them in stone with His own finger!

It is rather easy to understand why the two tablets should be called “The Testimony,” but many people may not understand why the Ten Commandments are also called “His Covenant” or “The Covenant.” They do not realize that covenants can be unilateral (one-sided), bilateral (two-sided), and multilateral (many-sided). God entered into a bilateral (two-sided) covenant with the descendants of Abraham, that is, a mutual agreement was reached between the two parties. God said, **“Now *if you obey me fully and keep my covenant* [laws], 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 19:5,6, insertion and italics mine) Israel accepted God’s proposal: **“When Moses went and told the people all the Lord’s words and laws, they responded with one voice, ‘Everything the Lord has said we will do.’”** (Exodus 24:3)

Marriage is a bilateral covenant and the marriage covenant remains intact as long as both parties are faithful to their covenant. So, the covenant between God and Israel was a bilateral covenant, like a marriage covenant, but the Ten Commandment’s covenant is a unilateral covenant! It remains intact whether people honor or reject it.

A unilateral (one-sided) covenant is not a covenant based on mutual agreement or performance. For example, whenever a person is sworn

in as a courtroom witness, he promises to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” This is a unilateral covenant between the witness and God. The court is a witness to this covenant. The witness promises to “tell the whole truth” regardless of what others may say or do. Consider this unilateral covenant: God said, **“I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.”** (Genesis 9:13-15)

The devil, working through false religion, has grossly distorted the role, importance, beauty, and value of the Ten Commandments. God did not impose His law on mankind as a recipe for salvation. The devil has cleverly created this deception. God did not impose the Ten Commandments on mankind to determine who will receive eternal life. The devil has created this deception. *Obeying the Ten Commandments cannot produce eternal life because eternal life comes through faith in God.*

We know that Babylon will persecute those who keep God’s seventh-day Sabbath holy during the Great Tribulation. When people learn that (a) obeying the fourth commandment cannot produce salvation, and (b) obeying the fourth commandment will surely bring persecution, many people will argue, “Why should we keep the Sabbath?” The 144,000 will respond, “It is God’s will that everyone obey His law. Out of love for you, Jesus came from Heaven and paid the price for *your* sins on the cross. If you love Jesus for what He has done and if you want to participate in His salvation, you will gladly obey Him because He is your Creator, your Redeemer, and the Master of your life. When we love God with all of our hearts, minds, and souls, and our neighbor as ourselves, the Ten Commandments declare how that love will be expressed.

Every human being will be blessed if they submit to God’s authority and obey His Commandments out of love. Even though the saints will be terribly persecuted during the Great Tribulation for their faith, they will be happy in the Lord! Consider Paul’s comment about his own persecution: **“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus**

may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body." (2 Corinthians 4:8-11) All created beings in God's universe, except those of us who are under the curse of sin, have God's law of love written in their hearts. In other words, sinless beings naturally live in harmony with God's covenant of love. Here is why: **"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, *giving joy to the heart*. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb."** (Psalms 19:7-10, italics mine)

The really good news is that a sealing process will occur during the Great Tribulation. Everyone who passes his test of faith will experience an amazing miracle. God's children will miraculously have the curse of sin removed from their minds and hearts. They will be given a new mind and a new heart and their new unfallen nature will be "sealed" within them. **"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. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."** (Hebrews 8:10-12)

The Ark of the Covenant Uncovered

I have digressed for a moment on the Ark of the Covenant and the Ten Commandments because you need to understand that the display of the Ark of the Covenant during the seventh trumpet will be an astonishing event that is accompanied with Heavenly glory, violence, and commotion. The five phenomena that occurred at the beginning of the Great Tribulation will be repeated when the Ark of the Covenant is displayed. Here are three reasons why God will display the Ark of the Covenant:

1. When the saints are sealed and all of the wicked are tattooed, the contest between Christ and Satan for souls will end. Jesus will then display His covenant which the righteous embraced through faith (they accepted the covenant without seeing the covenant). The

wicked will also see the covenant they despised. Because the contest for souls is over, God's law can be *physically* revealed to the world. Faith has become fact. Once the Ten Commandments are written in the hearts and minds of the saints (Hebrews 8:10-13), there will be no risk that God's people will be tempted to worship the law instead of the Lawgiver!

2. The Ark of the Covenant will be shown from Heaven's temple so that everyone can see (a) the reality of Jesus as Almighty God whose temple is not on this footstool called Earth, but in Heaven itself, (b) that God's law is the highest law – it overrules any law made by man, and (c) that mankind lives **under** the rule of law. It is foolish for men and women to think that they are **above** God's law. No one is exempt from the obligations imposed on man by our Creator. Babylon's clergy will be left speechless when they view the law they refused to recognize and obey. I imagine they will be just as dumbfounded as those who crucified Christ when they are resurrected at the Second Coming.
3. The Ark of the Covenant will be displayed at the seventh trumpet to encourage the saints. I am guessing, but I believe about one billion saints will be *alive* at the seventh trumpet. This awesome view of God's law will confirm the validity of their faith. Remember, at that time, the saints will have suffered persecution for more than three years. The saints who see this sight will live through the seven bowls without seeing death. (Daniel 12:1) Of course, the wicked will also see the law that justifies the seven bowls they are about to receive. (Revelation 16)

Has the Ark of the Covenant Been Found?

History suggests that Jeremiah hid the Ark as King Nebuchadnezzar approached Jerusalem to set siege in 605 B.C. In recent years, numerous claims have been made saying that the Ark of the Covenant has been found. However, no one has produced any evidence to substantiate the claim. The absence of validating evidence is puzzling. Personally, I believe these claims are false because the Ark is not on Earth! I believe God took the Ark of the Covenant to Heaven¹ after Jesus died on the cross so that He could **show it** to the whole world at

¹ Jeremiah 3:16 indicates that under the covenant with the nation of Israel (Plan A), a time would come when the Ark of the Covenant "would not be missed" and another Ark "would not be made." This prediction pointed forward to the arrival of Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom of

the proper time.

Now please consider the following seven points:

1. During the Great Tribulation, the infrastructures of Earth will be destroyed and travel will become virtually non-existent. If the world is in a “lock down” condition, what would be the point of finding the Ark if only a few thousand people in the immediate area could see it? Other than local interest, there would be zero global impact.
2. If the Ark of the Covenant was found prior to the Great Tribulation and if it was put on display in a museum, it would be regarded as a religious relic. In this context, the Ark of the Covenant would not “prove” anything to anyone. The Ark would be just another archeological find, and more importantly, the covenant would mean nothing! The Ark would be regarded like ancient treasures found in the Mayan temples. The world impact regarding such a “find” would be zero. God’s law would be treated as a relic instead of a divine revelation.
3. If the Ark of the Covenant was found prior to the Great Tribulation, the Jews would immediately lay claim to the Ark. More than likely, they would hide it from view in one of their holy places of worship. The net effect is that the Ark would immediately return to obscurity. Hidden from view and regarded as a Jewish icon, the impact of God’s covenant on the world would be zero.
4. Suppose the Ark of the Covenant was found prior to the Great Tribulation and no one was killed after touching it. (Remember how Uzzah died? – 1 Chronicles 13:9,10) This would indicate that the Ark had “lost its divine power” and would confirm that the Ark was just another relic from antiquity. This would also give many Christians the assurance that the Ten Commandments are Jewish and were abolished at the cross. Again, zero global impact.

God on Earth which did not occur. Instead, a new covenant was established and “Plan B” was put in motion. If “Plan A” had been fulfilled, the Ten Commandments would have been written in the hearts and minds of God’s children. (Ezekiel 36:24-27) Since the Ark of the Covenant had no further purpose on Earth after “Plan A” was abandoned, since God shows the Ark of the Covenant from Heaven at the seventh trumpet, and since there is only one Ark containing the original Ten Commandments, I conclude that Jesus took it to Heaven for safekeeping after He returned to Heaven.

5. If my conclusions are correct and the Ark of the Covenant is shown from Heaven during the seventh trumpet, there will be no question as to whether the Ten Commandments were abolished at the cross. In fact, Jesus will show the Ark *of the Covenant* to the *whole world* at an appointed time because this covenant has not been changed or abolished. The display of the Ark will confirm the faith of the saints who accepted the demands of God's law through faith, and it will condemn the faithless who refused to acknowledge their Creator and His unilateral covenant. Although this display will not change minds or hearts, it will be a great blessing to the saints and a horrible omen for the wicked.
6. When Jesus presented the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, His thunderous power was so great that the Hebrews were afraid for their lives. (Exodus 20:19) The power accompanying the presentation of the Ark of the Covenant at the seventh trumpet will be even greater. Imagine this: A dazzling Ark will be seen against a dark sky crisscrossed with violent lightning and deafening thunder. Even the ground shakes at this stunning display. This presentation of God's everlasting covenant will be an awesome experience for the people who are still alive at the time of the seven last plagues.
7. Finally, Jesus Himself wrote the two tablets of stone placed in the Ark of the Covenant. (Exodus 31:18, 34:1) This makes the covenant an original work. Heaven's temple does not have a *copy* of the Ark and the Ten Commandments. There is one original which was taken to Heaven for two purposes. First, it will be shown to the world during the seventh trumpet. Second, the Ark of the Covenant will endure through eternity as a witness that God is love. Nowhere is God's balance of mercy and justice better stated than in the Ark of the Covenant.

Summary

Unfortunately, this study on the seven trumpets of Revelation has been lengthy because the topic is full of crucial detail. By now, I hope it is clear why I write that the book of Revelation will not make sense without a proper understanding of the seven trumpets. The seven trumpets enables Revelation's story to take place. To conclude this study, here's a short review of the topics that we have studied:

1. Seven angels who stand before God were given seven trumpets in the spring of 1994.

2. The first four angels of the seven trumpets went out to hurt Earth, but they were told to wait until the 144,000 are sealed. (At this moment, we are still waiting for the sealing of the 144,000 to be completed.)
3. Sometime in the near future, a manmade worldwide crisis (possibly a nuclear war) could occur, causing God's saints on Earth to pray for His intervention.
4. Jesus will favorably respond to the prayers of His saints. The censer will be cast down and corporate mercy will end. The wrath of God will begin.
5. The first four trumpets, which will occur over a period of about sixty days, will dwarf the manmade crisis and entirely devastate Earth.
6. The first four trumpets will be (1) a meteoric firestorm that burns up a third of Earth, (2) an asteroid impact on an ocean, (3) an asteroid impact on a continent, and (4) darkness covering the middle third of Earth. This darkness could be caused by hundreds of simultaneous volcanic eruptions. Twenty-five percent of Earth's population will die from the first four trumpets. Notably wicked places all over the world will be destroyed.
7. World leaders, fearing God's enormous anger and even greater destruction, will convene to figure out a way to appease God's wrath.
8. Religious leaders will embrace three lies. The first lie is that everyone worships the *same* God, although He is called by different names. The second lie is that God would be pleased if the nations used force (legislation) to limit sinful behavior. Third, they will embrace the lie that God must be honored and worshiped according to majority rule within each nation.
9. Without firing a single bullet or going to war, Babylon will form and will be given authority over all nations. Because of fear and ignorance, political leaders will humbly submit to the demands of Babylon. The religious leaders of Babylon will tell political leaders in each nation how to proceed to appease God.
10. The pope will be selected as the leader of Babylon. He will serve as Babylon's chief facilitator until Lucifer establishes his theocracy during the sixth trumpet.

11. Babylon will persecute the 144,000 and those who embrace the gospel of Jesus. The saints will be persecuted for forty-two months. Persecution could begin on the sixty-fourth day after the censer is cast down.
12. The advance of the gospel will stall about 890 days into the Great Tribulation. Everyone will have taken a position on the gospel, but some wicked people will abandon their position when they experience the fifth and sixth trumpets.
13. The devil and his angels will be released from the spirit realm during the fifth trumpet. They will physically appear before the people of Earth with a great show of glory, signs, and wonders.
14. For five months, the devil will masquerade as “Almighty God” and his demons will torture the non-religious wicked group into submission.
15. At the end of the five months, the sixth trumpet will sound and the devil will abruptly change character. He will become a stern-faced dictator. He will demand that a theocracy be established and that all religions and governments be abolished. He will appoint ten kings (taskmasters) to oversee his theocracy.
16. For purposes of rations and administration, the devil will divide the people into groups of 1,000. Four of his angels will kill one-third of mankind. The result will be 666 survivors and one lieutenant per unit of 1,000. The devil will require all survivors to wear a tattoo showing the number 666 on their right hands. The devil’s lieutenants will also wear the devil’s name tattooed on their foreheads, which will indicate their high rank in the devil’s theocracy.
17. Counting from the day the censer is cast down, the seventh trumpet will sound on the 1,265th day. God will display the Ark of the Covenant from Heaven on this day. The righteous will be thrilled to see the Ark because they have God’s law written in their hearts and minds. The wicked, on the other hand, will tremble. They have refused to honor God’s covenant and they are therefore subjects of its curse. They will be condemned to death because they have rejected love and sacrifice and embraced selfishness and rebellion.
18. One thing will become very clear after the devil physically appears. Man was created as a lower order than the angels. We are no match for their superior strength and intelligence. The physical

appearing of the devil with 200,000,000 demons is designed to awaken the wicked, if possible, to man's desperate need of a Savior.

Closing Remarks

Near the beginning of this study, I wrote that God has several important objectives for the seven trumpets, which I hope you now understand. Here is a list of seven objectives I am sure will be achieved:

1. **The Revelation of Jesus:** The whole world will be introduced to the reality of Jesus Christ. The world will learn that Jesus is Sovereign. He is our Creator, Savior, and God. All other gods are manmade.
2. **The Intercession of Jesus:** The world will discover that God's wrath against Adam and Eve was suspended by Jesus' love for mankind. When the censer is cast down, a great awakening will occur because of God's wrath.
3. **The Worship of Jesus:** Babylon will attempt to appease God through forced worship. This endeavor on man's part will only make the voluntary worship of Jesus better known and understood.
4. **The Law of Jesus:** Babylon will make laws opposing the law of God. This will make the Ten Commandments (God's covenant) more widely known than ever before.
5. **The Love of Jesus:** Babylon will persecute the saints and in so doing, their love for God and one another will show the world how wonderful God's love is. In spite of persecution, God's people will be filled with peace and joy.
6. **The Character of Jesus:** When the devil is released from the Abyss, the world will see and experience what an "omnipotent" sinner is like. The man of lawlessness will do as he pleases. This will give everyone a glimpse of what Jesus is unlike. (I used the word "omnipotent" because no one will be able to thwart or stop the devil from doing whatever he wishes. At the present time, many people think this is the way that God acts.)
7. **Eternity with Jesus:** Few people presently understand the curse of sin. The order of things that we face has been in place for 6,000 years. The destruction of Earth, beyond the point of recovery, will force people to seriously consider their eternal destiny – either eternal life with Jesus or eternal separation (death) without Jesus.

Addendum

Revelation 8:2 and 1994

For those who are willing to invest the time and study, the following sections explain why I believe that 1994 is the only possible date for the event described in Revelation 8:2. For a more thorough study, please refer to my booklet *Great Clocks from God*.

1. Two Different Ways of Measuring Time

In apocalyptic prophecy, God *sometimes* measures time according to the operation of the Jubilee Calendar. In such cases, a day is translated as a year. For example, the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24 contain 490 days (seventy weeks x seven days/week = 490 days). The 490 days are *translated* as 490 years because they occur during the operation of God's Jubilee Calendar. Moreover, history confirms that this translation is warranted and correct. On the other hand, there are places in apocalyptic prophecy where God does not translate time as a day for a year. For example, the 1,000 years in Revelation 20:2, the five months in Revelation 9:5, the 1,260 days granted to the Two Witnesses, and the forty-two months in Revelation 13:5 are to be understood as literal time.

I believe there is a rule found in Scripture that answers the question of determining when prophetic or literal time is to be used. The fourth rule governing the interpretation of apocalyptic prophecy says, "The presence or absence of the Jubilee Calendar determines how God measures time in apocalyptic prophecy." In other words, when the Jubilee Calendar is operating, God wants us to translate a day for a year according to His Calendar. On the other hand, when the Jubilee Calendar is not operating, there is no translation.

Note: A rule of interpretation has no exception. The "seven times" imposed on King Nebuchadnezzar does not require translation because (a) that prophecy is not an apocalyptic prophecy, and (b) if it did, the king could not eat grass for 2,520 years ($360 \times 7 = 2,520$), which, of course, is impossible. The prophecy concerning King Nebuchadnezzar was a "local prophecy" directed at the king. Each type of prophecy has its own rules, and they cannot be mixed or merged. There are five types of prophecy in the Bible and these are discussed in detail in the chapter titled, "Getting Started with the Book of Revelation."

2. The Jubilee Calendar

God created the Jubilee Calendar. It is incredibly precise and God put this calendar in motion two literal weeks *before* the Exodus in 1437 B.C. By divine decree, God forced Israel to abandon their use of the Egyptian calendar (a summer-to-summer calendar) when He imposed His spring-to-spring Jubilee Calendar on them. (Exodus 12:1) Although this is not the place to present the function and fullness of God's Calendar, four topics with the Jubilee Calendar need to be discussed to show how 1994 connects with the book of Revelation.

A. Even though God required Israel to let the land rest from cultivation every seventh year, Israel did not observe the seventh year Sabbath rest while in the desert. (This makes sense since they did not grow crops in the desert.) However, the words in Leviticus 25:2 cause some people to think that cycles of seven years began when Israel entered Canaan. This understanding is incorrect. God started counting cycles of seven years at the time of the Exodus and the proof is rather simple. It only takes two steps. First, we have to align the date of Christ's death with the middle of the seventieth week and second, we have to identify one Jubilee year.

For reasons beyond the scope of this study, it can be proven beyond reasonable argument that Jesus died on Friday, Nisan 14 (April 7), A.D. 30. (For a comprehensive study on this topic, see my book, *Daniel, Unlocked for the Final Generation*, pages 196-208.) Once this date is determined, the *synchrony* of the weekly cycle of years becomes known because Daniel 9 declares that Messiah would die in *the middle of the seventieth week*. Therefore, A.D. 30 has to be a Wednesday year because Wednesday is always the middle day of the week. Now that we know A.D. 30 was a Wednesday year, we can identify all Sunday years forward and backward. For example, A.D. 27 and 457 B.C. were Sunday years, and A.D. 1844 was a Thursday year.

The second step requires identifying one Jubilee year. After we positively identify one Jubilee year, Jubilee cycles can be calculated forward and backward. Fortunately, there is one Jubilee year that is easily identified. It occurred during the fifteenth year of Hezekiah's reign. (Isaiah 37:30) Since Jubilee years always fell on Sunday years, this forces Hezekiah's Jubilee year to be 702 B.C. All other dates have to be eliminated because known historical events will not align. (Many scholars, knowing nothing about the synchrony of the weekly cycle of years and the operation of the

Jubilee Calendar, date Hezekiah's Jubilee at 701 B.C. This shows that good scholarship can get close to the truth, but sometimes there are limitations. History can resolve questions to a point, but sometimes, history cannot pinpoint a specific year.) The point of knowing that 702 B.C. was a Jubilee year is this: Once we know the location and synchrony of *one* Jubilee year, Jubilee cycles can be calculated. By counting forward or backward in forty-nine year intervals from 702 B.C., we find that God started the Jubilee Calendar on Abib 1, 1437 B.C., two weeks before the Exodus! No other date is historically possible.

- B. God treats the synchrony of time in a different way than we commonly treat time today. First, God counts time inclusively. Any portion of a unit of time counts as a whole unit of time. For example, Jesus spent a portion of Friday, all of Sabbath, and a portion of Sunday in the tomb. Jesus counted this as three days and three nights. (Matthew 12:40) All prophetic time periods are counted this way. This explains how Luke counted A.D. 27 as the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, even though Tiberius took office on September 17, A.D. 14. (Luke 3:1)

God also treats His weekly cycle in a different way than we commonly do. For example, God starts a *week* with Sunday, the first day of the *week*. We casually define a week as any period of seven days, but this is *never* the case in God's Calendar. When it comes to God's clocks, there is a big difference between seven days and a week. God's seventh-day Sabbath and God's seventh year rest for the land are determined by the first day of Creation and the first year of the Exodus, respectively.

- C. One Jubilee cycle contained seven full weeks of seven years each. Thus, a Jubilee cycle was forty-nine years in length. The forty-ninth year always fell on a Sabbath year that was synchronous with Israel's deliverance from Egypt. (Leviticus 25:8) *The weekly cycle is the basis for translating time – "a day for a year."* (Numbers 14:34) The year of Jubilee (the fiftieth year) always fell on the Sunday year that followed the forty-ninth Sabbath year. This may seem strange at first, but the fiftieth year of the old Jubilee cycle and the first year of the new Jubilee cycle occurred simultaneously. This method of counting time is confirmed by the Feast of Pentecost.

The Feast of Pentecost (the fiftieth day) was always celebrated on Sunday (the first day of the week). This is how the countdown to

Pentecost occurred: Passover fell on different days of the weekly cycle (like our birthdays). But, to calculate the Feast of Pentecost, the priests waited until the first Sunday following Passover to start counting off forty-nine days (seven full weeks). (Leviticus 23:15,16) Then, on the fiftieth day, which was the first day of the eighth week, the Feast of Pentecost was celebrated.

There is needless confusion over the length of Jubilee cycles. Jubilee cycles are forty-nine years in length because (a) the weekly cycle of seven years is not interrupted, (b) the weekly cycle of years remains synchronous with the year of the Exodus (year 1), and (c) the seventy weeks in Daniel 9 totals 490 years. If Jubilee cycles are fifty years in length as some people claim, it would be mathematically impossible to make the seventy weeks equal 490 years. The seventy weeks are 490 years (70 x 7) and 490 years are ten Jubilee cycles (49 x 10).

You may wonder, what does the Jubilee Calendar have to do with Revelation 8:2? The Jubilee Calendar appears to be important to Revelation 8:2 because God's patience with mankind appears to be seventy Jubilee cycles. In other words, from the Exodus in 1437 B.C. to 1994, there are seventy Jubilee cycles. For reasons forthcoming, I find that *God's patience ran out and Jesus handed the seven trumpets to the seven angels in 1994*. If you can accept this premise for a moment, then the delay described in Revelation 7 is consistent with everything written in Scripture about this matter. For example, suppose that God's patience with sin on Earth came to an end in 1994 – at the close of seventy Jubilee cycles. The seven trumpets were given to the seven angels, and before the angels could begin their mission of harm, they were told to wait. The destruction caused by the first four trumpets has been delayed for fifteen years thus far!

Thirty Jubilee Cycles

Because of Abraham's friendship and faithfulness, God chose Abraham's descendants to serve as trustees of His gospel. Unfortunately, this choice proved to be disappointing to God. For about 800 years, the Jews failed to live up to the covenant they made with God at Mt. Sinai. After their exile to Babylon, God gave Israel a second chance to become the model nation that He wanted to make of them. He graciously granted the Jews ten Jubilee cycles – seventy weeks – 490 years! (For comparison, at the time of this writing, the United States has been in existence for 233 years.)

Bible history reveals that during the Sunday year of the seventieth week (A.D. 27), Messiah began His ministry. (Luke 3) However, Israel rejected Messiah's message of love, truth, and righteousness, and they crucified Him. (Acts 10:39) When we examine Israel's history in light of the Jubilee Calendar, we discover a stunning fact: God granted to Israel, down *to the very day*, a total of thirty Jubilee cycles. (1437 B.C. to A.D. 34) This precision reminds me of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. **"At the end of the 430 years, *to the very day*, all the Lord's divisions left Egypt."** (Exodus 12:41, italics mine) This precision also highlights the fact that the Second Coming will occur on *the very day* which God has predetermined. **"Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days."** (Daniel 12:12)

Forty Jubilee Cycles for the Gentiles

When Israel's thirty Jubilee cycles ended, God started over. He wanted to give the Gentiles their chance as trustees of His gospel. God raised up a brilliant young Jew, Saul of Tarsus, and made him an apostle to the Gentiles in A.D. 34. As a result, the Christian church soon had more Gentile believers in it than Jewish converts. Because there is a New Covenant, the Christian church did not displace Israel; it replaced Israel. God abolished the Old Covenant by creating a New Covenant. This redefined Israel. Believers in Jesus are now the heirs of Abraham. (Galatians 3:28,29) History confirms that God granted forty Jubilee cycles to the Gentiles! (A.D. 34 to 1994) The proof of this assertion requires three steps:

First, we know that the Jubilee Calendar could not end at the cross because (a) Jesus' death occurred during the *middle* of the seventieth week (A.D. 30 was a Wednesday year), and (b) from our study in Daniel 8 we know that the 2,300 days began *before* the cross and they continue uninterrupted until A.D. 1844. This means the 2,300 days are translated (a day for a year) past the date of the cross without interruption *until* 1844. So, at a minimum, we are forced to recognize that the Jubilee Calendar with its day/year translation continued until the Thursday year of 1844. The Jubilee Calendar could not end in 1844.

This brings us to the second step. At this point in our discussion, we know the Jubilee Calendar is divided into three units of time: (a) a week of seven years, (b) seven weeks of seven years, and (c) seventy weeks of seven years. Since history indicates that God granted the Jews thirty Jubilee cycles to the very day, this indicates that the seventy weeks in Daniel 9 is one Great Day, one unit of time.

The Great Week

I have concluded there are seven Great Days of seventy weeks each. I like to call this week of seven Great Days, the Great Week. If this structure truly exists, the seventy weeks in Daniel 9 becomes the Great Day of Tuesday. It is most interesting to note that from the Exodus in the Sunday year of 1437 B.C. to the dedication of Solomon's temple in the Sunday year of 947 B.C., there are exactly seventy weeks or 490 years. (I call this seventy weeks the Great Day of Sunday.) Then, from the dedication of Solomon's temple to the decree of Artaxerxes in the Sunday year of 457 B.C., there is another Great Day of seventy weeks or 490 years. I call this Great Day, Monday. Then, from the decree of Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to Saul's conversion in the Sunday year of A.D. 34, there is another seventy weeks or 490 years. I call this Great Day, Tuesday. I believe this information provides evidence that a Great Week exists. If so, it would seem reasonable that there are four more Great Days to make up the Great Week since the prophecy describing the 2,300 days does not end until 1844. If we fill the Jubilee Calendar with four more Great Days of seventy weeks each, we end up with The Great Week having seven Great Days. Each Great Day has seventy weeks each, totaling 3,430 years. (1437 B.C. - 1994)

Counting inclusively, the Thursday year of 1844 falls 150 years short of spring, 1994, the end of the Great Day of Sabbath. We have to ask, "Would God terminate the Great Day of Sabbath with 150 years remaining? No. Inclusive counting *forces* the seventh Great Day of the Great Week to end on April 9, 1994. The Great Week began on Sunday, Nisan 1, 1437 B.C. and it ended 3,430 years (490 x 7) later on Sabbath, Adar 29, 1994.

Once the Great Week ends, the Jubilee Calendar with its weekly template of seven Great Days expires. Then, we discover an amazing outcome: All remaining apocalyptic time periods *after* 1994 occur without translation. If you can accept the premise that all prophetic time periods occurring *after* 1994 are to be treated as literal units, then everything stated in Scripture will perfectly fold into an even larger calendar called the "Grand Week," a calendar where a day translates into 1,000 years!

The Grand Week

The Grand Week is a week of millenniums totaling 7,000 years. Each day in the Grand Week represents 1,000 years. When all of the genealogical records, historical events, and prophetic time periods

mentioned in the Bible are assembled together, it appears that the Bible only speaks of 7,000 years for the duration of sin. I call these seven millennia the “Grand Week.” In other words, the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 will be the seventh millennium. Earth itself will rest from the works of sin during this Sabbath day rest. There is no time period throughout all eternity, past or future, that reveals the love of God like the time He has spent resolving the sin problem! I do not have words to describe the grandeur of this incredible process. I am sure saints and angels will study the drama of the Grand Week throughout eternity.

Full Cup Principle / Jubilee Language

The final step in connecting the Jubilee Calendar with Revelation 8:2 concerns the operation of the full cup principle as it pertains to timing. Notice how this works. God’s patience with the nation of Israel ended when Israel violated *seventy* Sabbath years. When this limit was reached, God swiftly raised up King Nebuchadnezzar to take His people into Babylonian exile before another Sabbath year could be violated! (Jeremiah 25:7-11) The Bible says Israel was exiled to Babylon for *seventy* years because Israel violated *seventy* Sabbath years. (Leviticus 26:31-36; 2 Chronicles 36:21,22) After the Babylonian exile was over, God granted Israel a second chance with respect to time. God granted the Great Day of Tuesday to Israel using Jubilee language. He used Jubilee language so that His people (who should have understood the Jubilee Calendar) could easily determine *which* decree would start the countdown to Messiah’s appearing. The timing of the first advent of Jesus *was not* supposed to be a surprise.

“Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, [Messiah] the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens’” (Daniel 9:25, insertion mine)

Have you ever wondered why God stated the sixty-nine weeks in two parts? Why does He say, “seven weeks” and “sixty-two weeks” when He could have easily said, “sixty-nine weeks?”

Note: The Hebrew word *shabuwa*’ translated as “weeks” or “sevens” means “the cycle of the seven” or commonly “the week.” Compare Daniel 9:24 with Daniel 10:3. Millions of people have read the words in Daniel 9:25 without realizing what they actually say. Perhaps the easiest way to explain this text is to use interlaced commentary:

“[Israel] Know and understand this: [There will be a total of four

decrees to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, however] **From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem** [that will occur during the Jubilee year, 457 B.C.] **until the Anointed One** [Jesus, Messiah], **the ruler, comes** [in A.D. 27], **there will be** [one cycle of] **seven ‘sevens,’** [a Jubilee cycle of forty-nine years. In other words, Israel, watch for the one and only decree that will be granted during a Jubilee year] **and** [after that Jubilee cycle of forty-nine years ends, count off] **sixty-two ‘sevens.’** [That is, count off sixty-two more weeks of years – 434 years. Then, watch for Messiah’s appearing. You will see Messiah baptized by John the Baptist in the Sunday year of A.D. 27, the first year of His ministry and the first year of the seventieth week.]” (Daniel 9:25, insertions mine)

Think about this. God could have granted any number of probationary weeks to Israel. Why did He deliberately choose seventy weeks? God could have established any time frame for the appearing of Messiah. Why did He select “seven weeks and sixty-two weeks”? Even more, God could have used the words “490 years” instead of saying “seventy weeks.” Why did He choose to say seventy weeks? God could have started counting down the years to the appearing of Messiah from something highly contemporary such as the victory of the Romans over the Grecians in 168 B.C. or He could have dated the appearing of Messiah from the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes IV on Kislev 15, 167 B.C. So, why did God deliberately describe the countdown to Messiah with the words “seven ‘sevens’ and sixty-two ‘sevens’”?

I keep making the statement, “*With God, timing is everything,*” because the more you understand about His timing, the more profound this topic becomes. I conclude that God set the time and He chose the descriptive words “seventy weeks” for two reasons. First, a week of years begins with a Sunday year. Second, seventy weeks makes up *one day* in His Great Week. In other words, God graciously granted Israel one more “day” to accomplish His objectives. (Hebrews 4:8) If God had said “490 years” instead of “seventy weeks,” the Jews would not have been able to figure out which decree to restore Jerusalem that God used to start His count. (There were four decrees.) The language “seventy weeks” should have been a huge clue because the first day of a week always begins on Sunday in God’s calendar. It is as though God was shouting to Israel’s generations, “Watch for the decree that will be issued to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in a *Sunday year!*” This is precisely what happened in the Sunday year, 457 B.C. (Ezra 7)

Note: Of the four decrees issued to rebuild and restore Jerusalem, only

one occurred in a Sunday year and interestingly, it was also a Jubilee year. Since this alignment only occurs every forty-nine years, Israel had no excuse for missing the appearing and ministry of Jesus. One of the remarkable features of the Jubilee Calendar is that during the year of Jubilee, the land was returned to its original owners free of charge. God did no less! He moved upon the heart of King Artaxerxes and the king returned the land of Judah to the Jews free of charge! He even gave them much wealth to help rebuild.

To be more precise, God divided the sixty-nine weeks into two parts of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks because He wanted His people to know and understand that the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem would not only occur in a Sunday year, but it would also occur in a Jubilee year! Since each Jubilee cycle is forty-nine years in length, God used the *first seven weeks* (the first forty-nine years) of the sixty-nine weeks to help Israel determine which decree was important to the appearing of Messiah. Every Jew knew that King Artaxerxes issued the all important decree on or about Nisan 1, 457 B.C., and as you might expect, 457 B.C. just happens to be a Jubilee year. Remember, 457 B.C. is a Jubilee year because 702 B.C. is a proven Jubilee year. It is as though God gave Israel every hint possible about the timing of Messiah's appearance and yet, Israel's learned scholars – pompous Pharisees and pious scribes – did not have a clue when the actual time arrived.

The arrogance and ignorance in Israel at the time of Christ's birth is no different than the attitude of Christians today. This darkness cannot be measured. *There is no darkness like stubborn religious darkness.* Jewish authorities were speechless when the wise men showed up in Jerusalem to worship the newborn King. The second appearing of Jesus is imminent. Bible prophecy has never been clearer and more understandable, yet many Christians treat the books of Daniel and Revelation as though they are full of darkness, gloom, and doom. But, open your eyes, and you will see that the darkness is gone!!! The book of Daniel has been unsealed. The rules that lead us into understanding the ways, plans, character, and love of God are shining brightly! **“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”** (Galatians 4:4,5, italics mine)

Seventy: A Random or Deliberate Number?

Is the number *seventy* important to God or is it just a random number? I am generally opposed to numerology because numerology is based on the notion that numbers have hidden or obscure meaning. Since there

are no defined rules regarding numerology, it is a nose of wax as far as I am concerned. It has taken some time for me to come to terms with the fact that certain numbers might have special meaning to God, but I have concluded that from God's perspective, the number seven represents completion. There are seven colors in the rainbow. There are seven continents and seven oceans. There are seven days in the week. Jesus spoke seven times on the cross. In the book of Revelation, there are seven angels, seven lamps, seven churches, seven seals, seven thunders, seven trumpets, seven heads, seven hills, seven thousand people, and seven bowls. Furthermore, we know that God's Jubilee Calendar is based on recurring and expanding units of seven. If after reading this paragraph you still don't see any significance to God's use of *seven*, you may want to skip down to the next section. (I'm smiling as I write this.)

Unlike God, man uses many numbering systems. For example, computers use a binary system of zeros and ones, but in order to program them, programmers use compilers that translate ordinary words into binary numbers for them. Perhaps the most common numbering system that man uses is the one based on units of ten. (Maybe ten fingers and ten toes got human beings going in this direction.) The nice thing about base ten is that each time a count of ten is *completed*, the count continues expanding or shrinking by simply moving the decimal point one place to the left or right. It is interesting to me that God's numbering system and man's numbering systems have one thing in common. They express completion at intervals and in order to continue counting, expansion becomes necessary. In God's case, He *translates* a day as a year whereas man moves the position of the decimal.

When God multiplies His "seven" with man's "ten," we find the limits of divine forbearance and human completion. In other words, *seventy indicates that God has gone as far as He will go and man has gone as far as God will let him go!* Multiplying seven and ten to determine completion helps us understand, in part, why God was moved to action when Israel violated *seventy* Sabbath years. This seems to be the reason why God put Israel in Babylon for *seventy* years. (2 Chronicles 36:21,22) Again, the idea of completion helps us understand why God granted *seventy* weeks to Israel. I think it is beyond reasonable argument to say that God's use of seven and ten is random and meaningless. God is just too deliberate and purposeful.

There are two other ways that God has used seven and ten. First, the

annual Day of Atonement always fell on the *tenth* day of the *seventh* month. The Day of Atonement was the most important day in Israel's religious year because God required Israel to stand before His judgment bar on that day. It was a somber day and a day of fasting. It was *the annual day of reckoning*, and everyone in Israel was concerned whether God had accepted their individual efforts to make atonement. Remember, *the seventh month indicates that God's justice has gone as far as He will go and the tenth day indicates that man's behavior has gone as far as God will let him go!* So, the tenth day of the seventh month is judgment day!

Second, the great red dragon in Revelation 12, the leopard-like beast in Revelation 13, and the scarlet beast on which the whore rides in Revelation 17 have *seven* heads and *ten* horns. The seven heads on these beasts represent the same thing, namely the seven religious systems of the world. The ten horns represent ten kings (political pawns) which the devil himself will appoint during the sixth trumpet. When the time comes, the seven heads and ten horns indicate *completion* – a world whose leadership is *full* of theological and political evil.

You may think this discussion on the number seventy amounts to conjecture. If so, then why does the “Great Week” and the “Grand Week” each consist of *seventy* cycles? The Great Week consists of seven Great Days and each Great Day consists of ten Jubilee cycles (seventy weeks). Likewise, the Grand Week consists of seven Grand Days and each Grand Day consists of ten centuries (1,000 years). When we place the seventeen prophetic time periods found in Daniel and Revelation in their proper places according to Rule Four, the dates and numbers will perfectly align so that everything neatly folds into a Grand Week of 7,000 years!

The Bottom Line

I believe there is a definite connection between the number “seventy” and 1994, and there is also a definite connection between the number “seventy” and the duration of sin. We can see that from Creation, God allotted a total of 7,000 years for sin. I call this time period, the Grand Week (each day of the week translates as 1,000 years – Psalm 90:4, 2 Peter 3:8). The evidence aligns backward and forward. From the beginning, God foreknew the limits of His patience with sin and He deliberately set the duration of sin to be seventy (7 x 10) centuries or 7,000 years! When God's use of seventy is further synthesized, I find that God's patience with Jews and Christians ended in 1994. In other words, for purposes of proclaiming the gospel, God abandoned human

organizations in 1994. The 144,000 will not be an organized body of people. Rather, they will be a group of diverse individuals upon whom the Holy Spirit rests. Seventy Jubilee cycles ended in 1994 and there is no further need to translate apocalyptic time as a day for a year. In 1994, God gave the seven angels the seven trumpets and they are armed and ready, waiting for the divine command to harm Earth.

Because the second and third trumpets involve asteroid impacts, I do not think it is coincidental that God gave the whole world a “prophetic sample” of coming events in 1994. You may recall the implosion of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 into Jupiter during July 1994. That marvelous event was televised and published worldwide. Those impact craters on Jupiter for the past fifteen years have been a harbinger of coming asteroid impacts on Earth. The comet, Shoemaker-Levy 9, broke up into a string of twenty-one chunks as it approached Jupiter and as these chunks accelerated into Jupiter’s gravity, they created the most powerful explosions ever witnessed by mankind. In fact, one impact crater is so large that three planets the size of Earth can fit in it!

Summary

Even though the Bible does not explicitly say when the seven angels received the seven trumpets, and even though the Bible does not mention 1994, I conclude that Jesus gave the seven trumpets to the seven angels in April 1994 because God’s patience with Earth ended with seventy Jubilee cycles. According to His great mercy, God granted Israel thirty Jubilee cycles and the Gentiles forty Jubilee cycles. Arriving at 1994 is not easy and a fair amount of skepticism is warranted. Nevertheless, I believe that a synthesis of the topics just discussed will rule out any other date. In summary, here are five major points:

1. **Two Different Ways of Measuring Time** – There has to a valid rule governing the interpretation of apocalyptic time because it is clear that some prophetic time-periods are to be translated and some are not. Based on the information presented above, I have drawn the line at 1994. Prior to 1994, a day is translated as a year in apocalyptic prophecy. After the expiration of the Jubilee Calendar in 1994, the translation of time is not permitted or justified. I cannot accept the premise that expositors of prophecy are free to interpret apocalyptic time according to personal whim or opinion because apocalyptic prophecy is based on a very intelligent design and God’s Word speaks for itself.

2. **The Jubilee Calendar** – The Jubilee Calendar did not end at the cross for two reasons. First, Jesus died in *the middle* of the seventieth week; therefore, the seventieth week was unfinished at the cross. Second, the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 operate on both sides of the cross; therefore the Jubilee Calendar and the translation of a day for a year operates on both sides of the cross. In this particular case, the 2,300 day year prophecy extends from 457 B.C. to A.D. 1844. The Jubilee Calendar did not end in 1844, and the Great Day of Sabbath does not end until 1994.
3. **The Great Week** – The time between the Exodus in 1437 B.C. and the dedication of Solomon’s temple in 947 B.C. was 490 years. Then, the time between the dedication of Solomon’s temple and the decree of King Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. was another 490 years. Then, the seventy weeks in Daniel consisted of 490 years. Since there are three units of 490 years each, they suggest the presence of an ongoing pattern. Today, we know that God gave the Jews exactly thirty Jubilee cycles of grace – to the very year. It also appears that God gave the Gentiles forty Jubilee cycles of grace (A.D. 34-1994). These two period of grace total seventy Jubilee cycles in all. Using the weekly template and aligning each unit of 490 years as a Great Day, we find the presence of a Great Week. When the Great Week ends, so does the translation of apocalyptic time.
4. **Full Cup Principle** – Evidently, God uses the numbers seven and ten to express the limits of divine forbearance. When Israel violated *seventy* Sabbath years, they were exiled to Babylon for *seventy* years. When God gave Israel a second chance, He gave the nation *seventy* weeks. We also see God’s use of seven and ten used during Israel’s annual judgment day, the Day of Atonement. This special day occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month. Furthermore, the dragon and the leopard-like beast in Revelation 12 and 13 have seven heads and ten horns. The heads and horns represent the sum of religious and political powers on Earth. Finally, the whole drama of sin fits neatly into *seventy* centuries (7,000 years). In other words, when the millennial Sabbath ends (seventh millennium), Earth will be made new.
5. **God’s Timing Is Perfect** – We find throughout the Bible that God’s timing is always perfect. He knows no haste or delay. Given this fact, two things stand out very prominently. First, if we translate the apocalyptic prophetic time periods prior to 1994 according to God’s calendar (a day for a year) and if we treat all

apocalyptic time periods after 1994 as literal time periods, everything written about timing in apocalyptic prophecy harmoniously aligns with a 7,000 year picture for the duration of sin. (Sin is destroyed at the end of the 1,000 years in Revelation 20.) Second, now that we understand what the seven trumpets are, if we align Revelation 8:2 with the end of seventy Jubilee cycles, it seems most appropriate that Jesus would give the seven angels the seven trumpets because God's patience with mankind ran out in 1994. We are living on borrowed time! In fact, giving the seven angels the seven trumpets in 1994 is the only way I know of to explain from the Bible the delay that is imposed on the first four angels in Revelation 7.

When all of the items discussed in this segment are aligned with a working knowledge of God's Jubilee Calendar and the precision of God's actions, there appears to be only one "biblically reasoned" date for Revelation 8:2 and 1994 is that date. Again, I say, "With God, timing is everything."

The Two Witnesses

“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.”

- Revelation 11:4

Note: This study utilizes certain concepts developed in the presentations on the 144,000 and the seven trumpets. For best results, please read those studies first.

Introduction

There has been a great deal of speculation and confusion on the topic of the Two Witnesses. Some Christians believe the Two Witnesses could be Moses and Elijah. Others believe the Two Witnesses could be two religious institutions such as Israel and the Church. Still, others believe the Two Witnesses could be Enoch and Elijah, the only two men taken to Heaven without seeing death.¹ Of course, there are other views, but we want a solid, definitive answer. What does the Bible teach?

When valid rules of interpretation are followed, the Bible will tell us who the Two Witnesses are because the Bible interprets itself. The solution may not be obvious at first, but the correct interpretation will be an exclusive solution because *there is only one interpretation* that can meet all of the specifications given to the Two Witnesses.

We will discover in this study that the Two Witnesses cannot be two men even though some translators have taken the liberty of inserting the word “men” into the Greek text. For example, Revelation 11:6 in

¹ Advocates of the Enoch and Elijah view presume that Enoch and Elijah must be brought back to Earth so that they can experience death. As far as we know, these two men were the only people taken to Heaven without seeing death. The problem with this preconception is that there is no mandate for people to experience death before going to Heaven. In fact, Paul clearly says people will go to Heaven without seeing death! He wrote, **“After that [the resurrection of the dead in Christ], we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”** (1 Thessalonians 4:17, italics and insertion mine)

the NIV says, “**These *men* have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying. . . .**” I have italicized the word “men” because this word is not found in the Greek text. NIV translators have forced the pronoun “These” to refer to men, but the antecedent of the pronoun is “the Two Witnesses.” Because the Two Witnesses are personified as “two prophets” in Revelation 11:10, some people (like the NIV translators) have jumped to the conclusion that the Two Witnesses must be two men. Under closer investigation, however, Revelation 11:4 will not permit the Two Witnesses to be two human beings. Revelation 11:4 says, “**These [the Two Witnesses] are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.**” (insertion mine) As we will see, these representations of the Two Witnesses will make perfect sense once a few things are understood.

Who Are the Two Lampstands and Two Olive Trees?

We will find in this study that God’s Two Witnesses have existed throughout eternity. They are omniscient and omnipresent and their testimony is infallible. The Two Witnesses are two observers! They testify about God to His subjects and they report back with their observations. During the Great Tribulation, God’s Two Witnesses will be given greater power than at any previous time in Earth’s history. They will boldly declare the truth about God. Their testimony will be confirmed with powerful signs and wonders and they will measure and *observe* man’s response. They will faithfully report their observations to God. In fact, Jesus will hear from the Two Witnesses before He passes judgment on any person. God’s Two Witnesses work in both directions. They come from God, they witness our response, and report back to God. Their testimony is unimpeachable.

Two lampstands and two olive trees are called “two witnesses” because they are an important part of a judicial process that will last for 1,260 days. This judicial process will be the judgment of the living. The Bible speaks clearly: “**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, italics mine) The judgment bar of Christ will be based on fact. Therefore, two infallible witnesses will be needed to establish the facts about each person.

When a conflict develops between two parties and they appear before a judge, two or more witnesses are required to establish a legal fact;

otherwise, the claims of the plaintiff are cancelled by the claims of the defendant. To prevent the cancellation of claims and counterclaims, God said, **“On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.”** (Deuteronomy 17:6) This principle will be followed during the judgment of the living. No one will be sentenced to eternal life or death on the testimony of one witness. Before He passes judgment on a person, Jesus will first hear from His Two Witnesses.

The Two Witnesses are the Ten Commandments¹ (represented by two lampstands) and the Holy Spirit (represented by two olive trees). One Witness is a member of the Godhead and the other Witness comes from the mouth of God. Because they are divine, these Two Witnesses have no conflict. They operate in perfect harmony. The Ten Commandments were written on two tablets of enduring and changeless stone. (Exodus 34:1) One tablet contains the first four commandments (defining man’s duty to God). The other tablet contains the remaining six commandments (defining man’s duty to man). The Ten Commandments are based on the principle of love – total devotion to God and selfless service for others. **“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets [the Scriptures] hang on these two**

¹ Note: For thirty years I have taught the Two Witnesses were the Word of God (Old Testament and New Testament) and the Holy Spirit (early rain and latter rain). For reasons that will be presented in this study, I have had to update my thinking. At first, you might think that I am splitting hairs because the Ten Commandments and the Word of God come from God. Yes, they do, but I have changed my position because the Bible offers a better explanation. The Bible predicts that mankind has a divine appointment. We are about to be caught in a great valley between two kings. The laws of one king will stand in direct opposition to the law of God, the Ten Commandments. These two kingdoms will sharply compete for citizens and distinct lines will be drawn in the sand. Everyone will be forced into making a choice. The consequence for taking sides – either way – will be dramatic. God’s Two Witnesses will make this contest embarrassingly simple. They will speak to seven billion people. They will cut through our religious diversity, our languages, confusion, and cultures with a simple declaration. It will be a Mt. Carmel moment. **“Elijah went before the people and said, ‘How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.’ . . .”** (1 Kings 18:21)

commandments.’” (Matthew 22:36-40; Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18)

In a sense, the Ten Commandments are prophetic. They reveal what people will do when they love God and man as they should. Paul understood this. He wrote, **“Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”** (Romans 13:10)

King David understood the perfection of God’s law. He wrote, **“The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.”** (Psalm 19:7-10)

The Two Witnesses are *personified* in Revelation 11 as two prophets because they will work through God’s prophets during the Great Tribulation. The Holy Spirit will empower each of the 144,000 to present God’s law to the world and the results will be spectacular. Honest hearted people will be “cut to the heart” with guilt when they hear about the demands of God’s law. Jesus predicted, **“When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of *guilt* in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”** (John 16:8, italics and insertion mine) Of course, human beings can reject the law of God and the demands of the Holy Spirit because nothing trumps free will in God’s universe.

The law of God operates like a plumb line. (Amos 7:8) It defines absolute right and wrong. Any deviation from the plumb line of God’s Word is sin. (1 John 3:4) This is why Paul wrote, **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** (Romans 3:23) The Bible uses the imagery of a plumb line because it defines true vertical, and God’s law defines the Truth about His will. The law of God measures our actions and the Spirit reads our thoughts and motives. Remember, God’s Two Witnesses work in both directions. They come from God and observe our response. Then they report their findings back to God. They are infallible witnesses! Their testimony is harmonious and their truthful testimony will enable Jesus to righteously and fairly pass judgment on each human being. **“Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a**

mirror and, after looking at himself [and seeing his sins], goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law *that gives freedom*, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it– he will be blessed in what he does.” (James 1:23-25, italics and insertion mine)

The Bible says the Two Witnesses will be killed at the end of 1,260 days by the beast that comes up out of the Abyss. (Revelation 11:7) I am often amused when people say, “The Two Witnesses cannot be the law of God and the Holy Spirit because you cannot kill the law of God or the Holy Spirit.” My usual response goes like this: “Revelation 11:4 says the Two Witnesses ‘are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.’ How does one kill two inanimate lampstands and two olive trees that are not on Earth?” I have not received a biblically reasoned solution to this question during the thirty years that I have been asking it. It’s as though Revelation 11:4 does not exist. Many Christians ignore Revelation 11:4 and jump to Revelation 11:10 which says the Two Witnesses are “two prophets” and this leap usually prompts a second question.

Unable to answer the first question, people often quote verse 8: **“Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.”** (Revelation 11:8) Then, they ask, “How can the law of God and the Holy Spirit lie in the street of the great city?”

The phrase, **“in the street of the great city,”** does not refer to a geographical place because the Bible plainly tells us the “the great city” is not a geographical place. **“Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. . . . This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. . . . [The angel said to John] The woman you saw *is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.*”** (Revelation 17:3,5,18, italics and insertion mine) The woman who will rule over the kings of Earth is identified by the title on her forehead; she is Babylon the Great.

We found in our study on the seven trumpets that Lucifer will modify Babylon and establish a theocracy during the sixth trumpet. He will set himself up in the place of God as “King of kings and Lord of lords”

over all of Earth. Lucifer's church-state is the great city that will rule over the kings of Earth. His theocracy is the great prostitute. After 1,260 days, the world will be like Sodom and Egypt. Sodom represents lawlessness, bold deviant behavior, and sexually immoral passions. Egypt represents defiance and hardness of heart. Remember, Pharaoh hardened his heart ten times! Lucifer's theocracy can be compared to the ancient city of Jerusalem – where Jesus was crucified. Jerusalem had rejected God's law and inserted its own. This explains why God was put on trial and condemned as a criminal. Lucifer will repeat the same process with Babylon the Great. She will condemn the people of God and punish them with death. **“I saw that the woman 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)

The phrase, **“Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city,”** refers to the ancient practice of victors showing utter contempt for their enemies. In ancient times, the greatest contempt a king could show for his enemies was to leave his enemies unburied. This allowed the dogs, vultures, and vermin to eat their victims. The stench of death and the never-to-be-forgotten sight of human beings being eaten by animals was a powerful testimony to anyone wishing to rebel against the king. The Bible predicts that Lucifer and his forces will kill most (if not all) of God's 144,000 prophets and leave their bodies unburied (Revelation 6:11; 7:3; 16:6; 18:24). Ironically, Jesus will do the same thing to Lucifer's servants! At the Second Coming, Jesus will show utter contempt for His enemies by throwing Lucifer's administration into a lake of fire. Jesus will kill the rest of mankind by a command (the sword that comes out of His mouth) and the bodies of the dead will lie all over the face of Earth. Birds (vultures) will gorge themselves on their flesh. (Revelation 19:21) Understand that when the Two Witnesses finish their work, the wicked will feel no sorrow or remorse when the 144,000 are slain. In fact, they will gloat and rejoice! (Revelation 11:10) When the Two Witnesses finish their testimony, God's servants will die and **“Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city [of Babylon the Great].”**

I must say again, “When valid rules of interpretation are followed, the Bible will tell us who the Two Witnesses are because the Bible interprets itself. The solution may not be obvious at first, but the correct interpretation will be an exclusive solution because *there is only one interpretation* that can meet all of the specifications given to the Two Witnesses.”

Killing the Two Witnesses

The *work and influence* of God's law and the Holy Spirit can be killed. In fact, Lucifer and his angels killed their work and influence in Heaven. The plumb line of God's law testified that Lucifer's actions were sinful and the Holy Spirit testified that Lucifer and his followers had hardened their hearts to the point that further communion with God was impossible. The same thing will happen on Earth. Near the end of the 1,260 days, the devil will use his deceptive miracles, as well as torture, to kill the work and influence of God's Two Witnesses. Of course, the devil cannot kill the Holy Spirit or abolish God's law, but the devil can lead people into rebellion through sin. The devil can kill the influence of the Holy Spirit in any heart *if* we cooperate with him! The devil has made the law of God irrelevant in the world today. Look around. People do evil things without shame or guilt. The devil works through arrogance and ignorance to shut out the Word of God. The devil also works through human passions. He aggrandizes sex, money, fame, power, and greed to lead us away from God. (2 Peter 1:4) Once we grieve away the Holy Spirit with persistent defiance, our blasphemy becomes permanent and therefore, unpardonable. (Matthew 12:31,32)

One day, Jesus said to the Pharisees, **“Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; *their teachings are but rules taught by men.*’ ‘You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.’ And he said to them: ‘You have a fine way of *setting aside the commands of God* in order to observe your own traditions!’ ”** (Mark 7:7-9) The Pharisees killed the influence of God's law by setting aside the law of God with rules (laws) made by men!

When a new law is proposed in the U.S. Congress, it is called a “bill” and given a reference number. Legislators know very well that bills frequently “die in committee” because a bill can be *killed*. Relationships can die and affection can be killed. Ask any divorce lawyer. The Boston Tea Party in United States history demonstrates that even a king's decree can be killed. So, yes, *the work and influence* of God's law and the Holy Spirit can be killed (made to no effect). False religion terminates the influence of God's law when it usurps the commands of God with rules made by men. Blasphemy is a far more important topic than most people realize! The devil's ultimate deception occurs when people believe that right is wrong and wrong is right. 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.” (John 3:19,20)

Human beings have the power of choice. We can choose to listen to God’s Two Witnesses or we can blaspheme them. Paul wrote, **“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”** (1 Corinthians 2:14) One last point – the antediluvians killed the Two Witnesses before the flood. **“Then the Lord said [to Noah], ‘My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.’”** (Genesis 6:3) The world rejected God’s law (Genesis 6:5) and they terminated the influence of the Holy Spirit through defiant rebellion. This is why God destroyed them – they could not be saved! Paul wrote, **“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared *in the Holy Spirit*, who have tasted the goodness of *the word of God* and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance”** (Hebrews 6:4-6, italics mine. See also Matthew 12:31,32.)

I hope these introductory remarks have been helpful. Of course, many questions still need to be answered and we will eventually get to them. At this point, though, I hope your curiosity has been engaged because the story of the Two Witnesses is extremely fascinating.

Witnesses Are Needed

Remember that when a conflict develops between two parties and they appear before a judge, two or more witnesses are required to establish a legal fact; otherwise, the claims of the plaintiff are cancelled by the claims of the defendant. This cancellation explains God’s command to Moses, **“One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”** (Deuteronomy 19:15)

From the previous studies on Daniel 7, Daniel 8, and the seven seals, we have determined that the judgment for the dead began in 1844. Because each dead person’s life is unique, because each person’s knowledge of God and His Word is unique, and because each person’s response to the Holy Spirit is unique, three witnesses are necessary in

the judgment of the dead. After the testimony of these three witnesses has been corroborated, Jesus passes judgment on each dead person.

The first witness to speak in the judgment of the dead is the *life record* of each dead person. The second witness to speak is the *law of God* (the plumb line) and the third witness is the *Holy Spirit*. God follows His own law in the judgment of the dead: **“One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”** (Deuteronomy 19:15) Notice how these three witnesses operate. First, Jesus reviews a flawless recording of the dead person’s actions. This is the first witness. Then, the second witness speaks: Jesus considers the level of knowledge the dead person had regarding God’s law. Finally, Jesus listens to the Holy Spirit’s report about the dead person. The Spirit intimately knows the heart and mind of every person (Romans 8:27) and His testimony is infallible. It is important to understand that the judgment of every dead person is unique, but completely fair. Every dead person is judged in the same way even though there are differences in actions, knowledge base, and responses to the Holy Spirit.

For example, those living in one age will have a different understanding of God and His law than those living in another age. Paul wrote, **“Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have [knowledge of] the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for [unto] themselves, even though they do not have [knowledge of] the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness [that they acted in good faith], and their thoughts now accusing [having known some guilt], now even defending them [by doing what was thought to be right].”** (Romans 2:14,15, insertions mine) Children and people with mental disabilities are held harmless, that is, God’s grace covers those who are not accountable for their sins. This makes the testimony of the Spirit very important because the Spirit intimately knows each of us. He knows our response to His promptings. He knows how willing or unwilling we have been when it comes to fellowship and communion with God. After Jesus assembles the facts presented by the three witnesses, He passes judgment. Those declared righteous will be resurrected at the Second Coming. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) Those found to be evil will not be resurrected until the 1,000 years have ended. (Revelation 20:5)

The Judgment of the Living

The second phase of the judgment bar is of Christ (the judgment of the living) and it begins when the censer is cast down and the Great Tribulation begins. The 144,000 will announce the judgment bar of Christ. They will cry out, “. . . **Fear God and give him glory, because *the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.***” (Revelation 14:7, italics mine)

The judgment of the living is *unlike* the judgment of the dead in several ways. First, the judgment of the living **does not require** a complete review of a person’s life. The judgment of the living will be based on our response to the Two Witnesses. Here is how it works: Jesus is going to test the faith of the living. (1 Corinthians 3:13; Revelation 3:10) All that matters to Jesus is our response to His Two Witnesses. At the end of 1,260 days, the judgment of the living will end because every person will have received either the seal of God or the mark of the beast by that time. If a person should die during the Great Tribulation *before* he receives the seal of God or the mark of the beast, he will be judged just like those who have previously died. Because many people will die before they are sealed or receive the mark of the beast, the judgment of the dead continues uninterrupted after the judgment of the living begins.

The second difference between the judgment of the dead and the living is that the judgment of the living involves *a four step process*. When the censer is cast down, everyone on Earth will participate in “Step One” even though they may not live long enough to complete all four steps. Some people will go through these four steps faster than others. The first people to be judged and receive the seal of God will be the 144,000. They are sealed just before the Great Tribulation begins. (Revelation 7:1-4) They are the first fruits of the end time harvest. (Revelation 14:4) After the 144,000 are sealed and empowered, the censer will be cast down and the four steps will begin. They are rather easy to understand.

The Four Step Process

Step One – The Law of God Proclaimed: When the censer is cast down, the 144,000 will go to work. The Holy Spirit will empower them to preach the law of God as a *witness* to all nations. (Matthew 24:14) A witness does not have to be a human being. Consider this example: **“After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law**

from beginning to end, he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord: **‘Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. There it [the Words of God] will remain as *a witness* against you.’**” (Deuteronomy 31:24-26, italics and insertion mine)

God’s law operates like a plumb line. God’s law defines the truth and in so doing, it destroys lies and deception. Nothing is more wonderful than *the light* of truth to those who love truth. During the Great Tribulation, God’s Word will be given unusual power to cut people “to the heart.” Remember Peter and the disciples on the Day of Pentecost? “[Peter said] **‘Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’** **When the people heard this, *they were cut to the heart* and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do [to escape God’s wrath]?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ *for the forgiveness of your sins*. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’**” (Acts 2:36-38, italics and insertions mine)

The overwhelming devastation of the first four trumpets will subdue religious prejudice for a short time. God’s manifold wrath will open the minds and hearts of a religiously diverse world so every person, regardless of language, culture, or religious background can thoughtfully and intelligently consider His law which the 144,000 will proclaim. People will hear the testimony of Jesus (the words of Jesus) coming out of the mouths of the 144,000 and the honest in heart will be “cut to the heart.”

Step Two – Holy Spirit Discomfort: God’s law makes no sense without the enlightenment of His Spirit! **“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”** (1 Corinthians 2:14)

God’s law will be proclaimed throughout the world with Holy Spirit power. The distinction between truth and error, good and evil, will be made so plain that young people will even be able to understand the difference. Conviction will fall upon the honest in heart and painful decisions will be required. The social consequences for following Jesus will be severe. (John 16:1-3) The Holy Spirit will sufficiently “pressure” each person to choose the right and refuse the wrong. (See Joshua 24:15 and Hebrews 3:7-19.) Socially and culturally speaking, the situation will be difficult.

The gospel of Jesus always puts a person in a tough situation because the gospel demands total submission and loyalty to the law of God, and it goes without saying that our fallen human nature finds this difficult. When there is a price to pay for submission to God's law, our faith in Christ is tested. Do you remember how Peter betrayed Christ outside Caiaphas' home? (See Mark 14:53-15:1.) That embarrassing moment was a turning point in Peter's life. Peter realized that Friday morning that there was a huge difference between knowing Jesus and surrendering to Jesus. A few weeks later, Peter was chosen as the primary speaker at Pentecost because he had openly betrayed Christ and repented. Jesus gave this converted disciple a chance to let his countrymen clearly know where he now stood. I mention this matter because Peter knew first hand the internal struggle between loyalty and cowardice. He wrote, **"For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, *if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?*"** (1 Peter 4:17,18, italics mine)

Those who love God and His truth will eventually step out in faith and embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. **Once** a person decides to take his stand to obey God's Word, he will be given as much grace and strength as is needed to face the trials and persecution that will follow. On the other hand, people who cannot make a decision to obey the gospel will capitulate. *There is no strength to bear the consequences of persecution without first making a wholehearted decision to follow Christ.* Cowards, faithless, and double-minded people will go along with the flow to avoid suffering, and their eternal loss will be mind boggling. (Revelation 21:8) **"... 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.' The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God."** (1 Corinthians 2:9,10)

For 1,260 days Jesus will watch and wait, patiently allowing each person to make up his own mind. The Holy Spirit will pound on every heart's door. The third member of the Godhead will do everything short of violating human choice to get rebellious people to surrender to the plumb line of Truth – the law of God; unfortunately, many people will choose to rebel. Like the rich young ruler, they will conclude that the price for obedience is just too great. (John 3:19-21; Luke 18:18-25; Revelation 13:8) Without the enabling power that comes from a determined decision to obey Christ at any price, the wicked will be right – the price for obedience is too great.

Step Three – Your Final Decision: During the judgment of the living, three forces will be working together. The Word of God will be **heard** by everyone. Then, the Holy Spirit will **apply great pressure** within every heart to obey God’s law, and last, **persecution will force** everyone into making a decision. At first, you might think that the Two Witnesses are pulling people toward the shores of salvation and persecution is driving them away, but it is not what you think! Those who love God and His law will receive the testimony of the Holy Spirit. They will be willing to accept persecution because they are committed to pleasing God at any cost. On the other hand, those who love their lives and their possessions more than God will not be able to take the heat and accept the suffering that comes with their decision. Jesus said, **“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”** (John 12:25) **“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”** (Matthew 19:29)

There are always some people who will waver back and forth for a time, but increasing pressures from persecution will eventually force everyone into their final decision. Everyone living on Earth will either receive the mark of the beast or the seal of God. There is a simple reason for the persecution of the saints: Salvation comes through faith in Christ. Therefore, the Great Tribulation will be a test of faith. Faith in God quickly separates people. Remember the twelve spies that Moses sent into the Promised Land? (Numbers 14) Faith is a scary thing to those who do not know God and the power of His Word. Faith in God separates sheep from goats. Our actions declare our faith. James agrees. He wrote, “. . . **I will show you [and God] my faith by what I do.**” (James 2:18, insertion mine) Jesus assured the church members at Philadelphia (an early Christian church that had suffered persecution for years), **“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from [or during] the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.”** (Revelation 3:10, italics and insertion mine)

Step Four – The Seal and the Tattoo: Every person who surrenders to the law of God and the Holy Spirit will fall in line with the testimony of Jesus. After choosing to obey Jesus without regard for the consequences, each person will be given the strength and faith to pass any test which persecution might impose. The fires of persecution will refine and purify the faith of the saints. “. . . **I will refine them like**

silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The Lord is our God.’” (Zechariah 13:9) After passing some fiery tests of faith, a dramatic miracle will happen. It is ironic that after losing everything he owns, each faithful person will then lose his carnal nature!

The sealing of the saints requires the testimony of the Two Witnesses. The law of God will serve as the plumb line. It will measure the actions of John Doe. Jesus will see that John did, in fact, submit to God’s law. John will demonstrate his love for Jesus and his neighbor. The Holy Spirit will testify that John’s faith was thoroughly tested and he loves God with all his heart, mind, and soul, and his neighbor as himself. John gave everything he owned for the sake of the gospel! John was persecuted for worshiping Jesus on His Sabbath day. John’s actions clearly showed his love for God and man. The testimony of God’s Two Witnesses will establish the fact that John loves God and man. Jesus will announce His judgment: “Seal John Doe! Set him free from sin’s curse. Give him the wedding robe!” At that moment, John’s carnal nature will be removed and John will no longer have a propensity for sinning! John Doe will be like Adam before the fall.¹ He will feel a joyful difference and if he is in prison, he just might start singing at midnight. (Acts 16:25)

Those who reject the law of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit will become more rebellious and hard hearted as time passes. Eventually, everyone in this crowd will commit the unpardonable sin. God’s plumb line will measure their rebellion and the Holy Spirit will confirm the blasphemy of each person. To save their possessions and themselves from death, the wicked will eventually submit to wearing the mark of the beast – a tattoo which Lucifer will impose on mankind during the sixth trumpet. After everyone has been sealed or tattooed, the judgment of the living will come to an end and the influence of the Two Witnesses will disappear. Their work and influence is finished. **“Now when they have *finished* their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss [Lucifer] will attack them, and overpower and kill them. . . . The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.”** (Revelation 11:7, 10, italics and insertion mine)

¹ For further discussion on the sealing, please see Chapter 6 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*.

Three Observations

Now that both phases of the judgment bar of Christ (the judgment of the dead and the living) have been discussed, three observations need to be made:

1. Consider the righteousness and fairness of God when judging mankind. God will deal with the dead and the living, the rich and poor, the educated and the uneducated, the Christian and non-Christian using the same witnesses. Everyone will be judged according to their actions. **“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”** (Ecclesiastes 12:14) **“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) **“The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”** (Revelation 20:13)

Jesus judges the dead and the living according to their actions, not their religious beliefs, or even their faith because their actions reveal their faith and love, not the other way around. **“In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”** (James 2:17)

2. Those who receive the seal of God will be set free of sin’s power. Jesus said, **“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”** (John 8:32) I cannot emphasize this aspect of God’s amazing grace enough! Think about this: Even the worst addict or the vilest sinner can be set free of their addiction and sinful baggage if only they will step out in faith and obey the gospel of Jesus. The choice for salvation will be very clear during the Great Tribulation, but the cost will be great. Jesus says, **“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”** (John 14:15) It is interesting to me that the fourth commandment (which will become an object of great hatred) is the only commandment in the Ten Commandments that commands people to cease from work at an appointed time. What a wonderful commandment! God requires rest on His seventh day so that His children can rejuvenate. The 144,000 will powerfully proclaim, **“Worship [the Creator on His holy day, worship] him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water,”** but astounding as it seems, millions will rebel. The fourth commandment has been scorned for centuries and the wicked will widely resist it when they are confronted with the demands of God’s

law! Why is this called blasphemy? Blasphemy is rebellion against the law of God. **“The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.”** (Romans 8:7) This hostility cannot be justified. It only exists because we have carnal natures. Nothing is more wonderful than a Sabbath rest from the burdens of life. I have found God’s Sabbath rest to be my favorite day of the week! Jesus said, **“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”** (Matthew 11:29,30)

3. By the time Jesus closes His judgment bar, He will have passed judgment on every soul who has ever lived on Earth. When He appears at the Second Coming, He will deal separately with four groups of people:
 - A. The righteous dead
 - B. The righteous living
 - C. The wicked dead
 - D. The wicked living

“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, italics mine) Notice the outcome for each group: The righteous dead will be resurrected, and the righteous living will be caught up together with the righteous dead to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) The wicked dead will not be disturbed. They will sleep through the Second Coming and be resurrected at the end of the 1,000 years. (Revelation 20:5) The wicked living will be destroyed at the Second Coming and they will sleep during the 1,000 years. (Revelation 19:19-21) Every person who lived during Earth’s 6,000 years of history will be in one of these four groups at the Second Coming.

Jesus Selects 144,000 Prophets

The book of Revelation is carefully designed. Every detail is perfectly choreographed. Every scene is deliberately set up, and each of the seventeen prophecies in Daniel and Revelation produce a matrix of timing and events that harmoniously conforms with valid rules of interpretation. A proper understanding of apocalyptic prophecy produces an incredible story about Jesus and His offer of salvation. In fact, the entire Bible dovetails into the “Revelation of Jesus Christ” much like all the electrical wires in a house connect to the breaker box. The role and character of the Godhead, their love for each other and

mankind, the sovereign authority of Jesus, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Father's plan for our salvation, and its timing – all this is found in apocalyptic prophecy. I have said many times that apocalyptic prophecy is not so much about future telling as it is about the love, plans, and ways of God. *If you really want to appreciate the fullness of salvation's process, you have to study the books of Daniel and Revelation.*

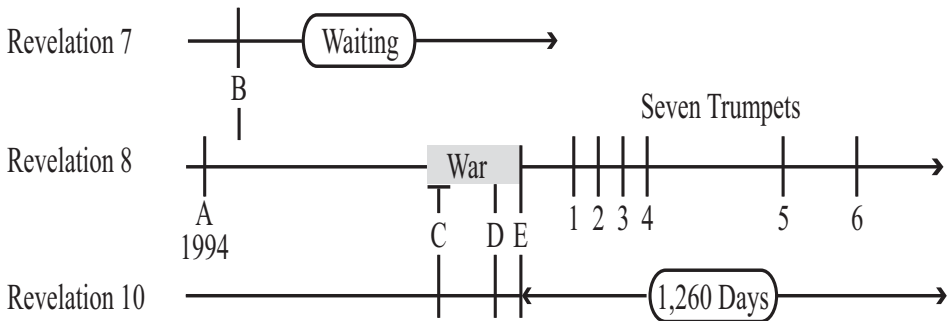
Revelation 10:1 occurs *prior* to the casting down of the censer in Revelation 8:5. When the time for Revelation 10:1 arrives, Jesus will quietly descend to Earth to make Himself known to those whom He has chosen to be His servants. Like Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, most of the 144,000 do not personally know Jesus currently, but when they are called, they will see Him and understand His sovereign authority over Heaven and Earth. No one else will see Jesus descend. (Compare with Daniel 10:7 and Acts 9:7.) This appearing parallels the Lord's unannounced appearing to Abraham. Remember how the Lord and two angels came down from Heaven (in the form of three men) to see for themselves how great the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah had become. (Genesis 18) The two angels who came with the Lord came to serve as two witnesses. In a similar way, the Lord will quietly descend from Heaven to physically appear before His servants. He will tell them of His selection, He will empower them with His Two Witnesses and the destruction of Earth (the first four trumpets) will begin.

“Then I saw another mighty angel [this angel is Jesus] *coming down* from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He *planted* his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land [His stance declares sovereign rule over land and sea], and he gave a loud shout [a thunderous announcement] like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke.” (Revelation 10:1-3, italics and insertions mine)

Timing

Rule One of apocalyptic prophecy says that each apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning and ending point in time. I understand that Revelation 10:1 occurs a few days *before* the censer is cast down in Revelation 8 and before the seven trumpets begin. Please examine the chart on the following page and notice the relationships between the prophecies in Revelation 7, 8, and 10:

Relationships between Revelation 7, 8, and 10



A = In 1994, the limits of God’s patience were reached. The Jubilee Calendar expired. The seven angels were given the seven trumpets.

B = The first four angels of the seven trumpets were told not to harm the earth – until the sealing of the 144,000 is completed.¹

C = At approximately the same time I believe a great war begins. Jesus will descend from Heaven, declare His sovereign authority over Earth, and announce that the appointed time for God’s wrath has come. Jesus selects and empowers the 144,000.

D = A possible nuclear exchange occurs. The saints pray for God’s intervention.

E = A few days later, the first of seven thunders occurs, Jesus declares there will be no more delay, the censer is cast down, and the 144,000 begin preaching for 1,260 days.

Who Is The Mighty Angel?

John wrote, **“Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars.”** (Revelation 10:1) The mighty angel in Revelation 10:1 is Michael/Jesus.² Jesus is depicted as the angel Michael for several reasons. Consider the following:

1. John’s description of Jesus in Revelation 10 and Ezekiel’s description of Jesus in Ezekiel 1 are in perfect harmony even

¹ For further discussion on the sealing, please see Chapter 6 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*.

² See Chapters 1 and 2 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*, for a discussion on why Michael and Jesus are two different manifestations of our Creator.

though these men lived approximately 700 years apart. Ezekiel wrote, **“Above the expanse over their heads [the four living creatures] was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking. He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.’”** (Ezekiel 1:26-2:1, insertion and italics mine)

Ezekiel saw the Lord sitting on His throne and He resembled the form of a man because mankind was created in God’s image! Angels look something like men, as well. (Genesis 1:26,27; 19:1; Daniel 9:21; Hebrews 13:2; Revelation 9:7) The fiery appearance of Jesus in Ezekiel 1 and the rainbow surrounding Him indicates that He is God. (Daniel 10:5,6) Jesus is the Creator of light. (Genesis 1:1; 1 John 1:5; John 8:12) The rainbow testifies that this angel is the Source of light and everything that exists. (Colossians 1:16) *No being, other than God, is surrounded by a rainbow in the Bible.* When God made the promise that He would not destroy the world with another flood, He said, **“I have set my rainbow in the clouds . . .”** (note the possessive pronoun) in the sky for everyone on Earth to see. (Genesis 9:13, italics mine) No throne, other than God’s throne, has a rainbow encircling it. The angel in Revelation 10:1 is a member of deity and there is only one angel who is deity – Michael. The rainbow is telling. (Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:3)

2. The angel in Revelation 10 takes a deliberate stance. John says, **“He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land.”** The angel’s posture and location indicates sovereign authority over Earth (both land and sea). John saw Jesus as a mighty angel in this prophecy for several reasons. Angels are a higher order of creation than mankind. Angels have strength and powers that go far beyond human ability. Michael, the Archangel, is King of kings and Lord of lords over all creation, Heaven and Earth combined. (Phillipians 2:9,10) Prior to living among us as a man, Jesus lived in Heaven in the form of an angel. This is why Jesus is also called, Michael, the Archangel. When Jesus returned to Heaven on Resurrection Sunday (John 20:17), He resumed His

identity and authority as Michael, and He led *His* angels in a successful battle to evict Lucifer and his angels from Heaven. (Revelation 12:7-9)

3. Jesus is represented as a mighty angel in Revelation 10:1 because He is the *commander* of the seven angels who have the seven trumpets. In the chapter on the seven trumpets, we found that seven exalted angels stand before God's throne. These angels were given the seven trumpets in 1994 and they have been waiting for several years for a command from Jesus to begin destroying Earth. Jesus will release the first four angels with their trumpet destruction when He announces ". . . **There will be no more delay.**" (Revelation 10:6) This mighty angel, actually Michael, is the commander-in-chief of the seven angels. Michael/Jesus is *not* a created being like angels or human beings. Michael is God, a co-eternal member of the Godhead. Michael is equal in every way to the Father. Many people stumble over the idea that Michael is Jesus, but whether He lives among the angels as one of them or among men as one of us – neither position diminishes the divinity or the fullness of Jesus. In fact, both incarnations expand the divinity of Jesus by revealing the love that God has for His creation! Think about this: The Creator of angels and human beings lives and walks in the shoes of His own creation. Michael/Jesus lives among us as one of us! Jesus is called by His angelic name, Michael, in Daniel 10:13,21, 12:1, Jude 1:9 and Revelation 12:7 because the Father wants us to know that even after assuming humanity, Jesus remains the arch-angel, the commander of Heaven's angels. (The prefix "arch" comes from a Greek word that means "above others" – the English words "mon-arch" means "one ruler" and arch-bishop means a "bishop above others.")
4. Another clue proving that the angel in Revelation 10:1 is Jesus comes indirectly from John and the apostle Paul. Paul tells us that Jesus Himself will come down from Heaven, and speaking with the authority of the archangel, Michael, the dead in Christ shall come up out of their graves. **"For the Lord *himself* will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with *the voice of the archangel* and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first."** (1 Thessalonians 4:16, italics mine) Paul says that the Lord Himself is the archangel. No one but Jesus has the authority to give this command and the power to create life. (John 1:4) Jesus says that He holds the keys to life and death. **"I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for**

ever and ever! **And I hold the keys of death and Hades** [the grave].” (Revelation 1:18, italics and insertion mine) But even more important, Jesus said, **“I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear *the voice of the Son of God* and those who hear will live.”** (John 5:25, italics mine)

5. Finally, the best clue comes from the actions of this angel. *No other being can say and do what is done in Revelation 10, but Michael/Jesus.* Specifically, Jesus swears by Himself in verse 6, to flawlessly carry out the “Great Tribulation Plan” which the Father gave Him. **“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 [of God’s wrath]!’ ”** (Revelation 10:6, insertions mine)

We know from John 1:10, Hebrews 1:2, Colossians 1:16 and other places in the Bible, that Jesus is the Creative Agent of the Godhead. Jesus has made everything that exists. So, if the mighty angel in Revelation 10:1 is our Creator, why does the language in verse 6 suggest that Jesus is swearing by someone other than Himself? We find this literary technique used in other places in the Bible and the purpose for this technique is *emphatic disclosure, that is, Jesus refers to His office as The Creator of the universe because there is no higher authority.* Consider three other references where Jesus refers to Himself in the third person:

- A. First, **“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, ‘The Lord [Sovereign God] rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?’ ”** (Zechariah 3:1,2) In this passage, the Lord silenced the devil by asserting sovereign authority. The Lord simply said, “The Lord rebuke you.” This divine denunciation silenced Lucifer. He could not say another word. The Word of God has incredible power. Remember, Jesus calmed the Sea of Galilee with a single command (Matthew 8:26) and the Heavens and starry hosts were formed by the breath of His mouth. (Psalm 33:6; Colossians 1:16)
- B. The following reference shows Jesus referring to Himself in the third person: **“But even the archangel Michael, when he**

was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, **‘The Lord [Sovereign God] rebuke you!’** ” (Jude 1:9, insertions mine) The devil argued that Moses should not be resurrected and taken to Heaven because Moses had sinned against God. Once again, Jesus silenced the devil with a divine command.

- C. Finally, the following reference shows Michael/Jesus speaking to Abraham. The angel swears by Himself because there is no higher authority. **“But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, ‘Abraham! Abraham!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. ‘Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.’ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, ‘On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.’ The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, ‘I swear by myself,’ declares the Lord, ‘that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.’** ” (Genesis 22:11-18)

Jesus takes the oath in Revelation 10:6 swearing by Himself because one God (Michael/Jesus) promises another God (the Father) that He will conclude the sin problem according to the blueprint which the Father gave Him for man’s salvation! (Psalm 2:7-12; Revelation 1:1) From the beginning of sin, the plan of salvation has involved three Gods (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). When Adam and Eve fell, Jesus gave up certain prerogatives as “Creator God.” He submitted to the authority of the Father and His plan of salvation in order to save mankind. On that day, Jesus became the “son” of God. This clarifies why Jesus is called, “The Son of God.” The Hebrew word for son is *ben* and it means “subject or one who is subjected to the authority of another.” This amazing event is

recorded in Psalm 2: **“I will proclaim the decree of the Lord [the Father]: He said to me [Jesus], ‘You are my Son [subject]; today I have become your Father [Overseer]. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. [I will give them to you if you redeem them.] You will rule them with an iron scepter [unbroken rule]; you will dash them [your enemies] to pieces like pottery.’”** (Psalm 2:7-9) Jesus reiterated the results of this decree in the Garden of Gethsemane: **“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; *you gave them to me* and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.”** (John 17:6,7, italics mine)

We know that one God (Jesus) came to Earth to do the will of another God (the Father). (John 6:38) To redeem mankind from the curse of sin, Jesus had to *perfectly* carry out the plan of salvation which the Father prepared before sin began. (Revelation 17:8) When Jesus takes the oath in Revelation 10:6, He promises the Father that He will do everything that the Father requires, and the twenty-four elders, along with millions of angels, will be eye witnesses of this oath. We can compare Jesus’ oath with the *swearing in* of a new president of the United States. The president swears before God and witnesses (U.S. citizens) at his inauguration, that he will uphold the constitution (the laws) of the United States to be best of his ability, “so help me God.”

6. Ultimately, the little book that rests in the angel’s hands proves this angel is Michael/Jesus. Notice how this proof unfolds. Ezekiel was given a book to eat just like John. Ezekiel found it sweet in his mouth (that is, wonderful to understand), but the experience of delivering the words of God to obstinate people would be bitter. Jesus told Ezekiel: **“You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.’** Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. And he said to me, ‘Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel.’ So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.’ So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as

honey in my mouth. He then said to me: ‘Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak *my words* to them. . . . But the house of Israel is not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate.’” (Ezekiel 2:7-3:4,7, italics mine)

The selection and empowerment of 144,000 prophets was represented to John as though he would be one of them. John, like the prophet Ezekiel, was given a little book to eat and then told to prophesy again. This literary technique takes very few words to describe. By putting John into the experience of the 144,000, the final generation can quickly understand the mission and experience of the 144,000.

John’s experience: **“Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: ‘Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.’ So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, ‘Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’ I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told, ‘You must prophesy [preach] again about [before] many peoples, nations, languages and kings.’**” (Revelation 10:8-11, insertions mine)

We have examined six elements concerning the identity of the mighty angel in Revelation 10:1. They are as follows: (1) the rainbow indicating deity, (2) the deliberate posture indicating sovereign authority over land and sea, (3) as Commander-in-chief over the angels, Michael/Jesus declaring when the delay ends and the seven trumpets begin, (4) as God, Michael/Jesus resurrecting the dead on the last day with His own voice, (5) the mighty angel swearing with an oath that He will carry out the Great Tribulation plan which the Father has given Him, and (6) John and Ezekiel receiving the words from God. God told both of them to eat the book and speak for God. All of these elements harmoniously satisfy all of the specifications and prove the mighty angel described in Revelation 10 is Michael/Jesus.

The Loud Shout – A Sign of the End

“And he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke.” When Jesus descends from Heaven to meet with the 144,000, He will give a loud shout – like the roar of a lion. I believe this shout will be heard

throughout Earth. (See Acts 9:7.) For the 144,000, this thunder will be an awesome sign. For the rest of mankind, this thunder will seem like a scary phenomenon. Heavy thunder will boom and roll throughout Earth, but nothing will be found in the Heavens or on Earth to produce such a awesome sound! (See Job 36:26-37:5.) This shout serves as a signal. Jesus Christ has planted His feet on land and sea. He has taken control of Earth away from mankind. John does not reveal what is said the shout, but I like to think that Jesus will say, "Prepare the earth to meet its Creator!" (Amos 4:12)

You may recall that the Father spoke openly to Jesus from time to time when Jesus was on Earth. Consider this situation which occurred a few days before Jesus was crucified: **"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.'** The crowd that was there and heard it [but did not understand the words] **said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, '*This voice was for your benefit, not mine.* Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.'**" (John 12:27-32, italics and insertions mine)

The Seven Thunders

After Jesus roars like a lion, John hears seven thunderous voices speak. **"And when the seven thunders spoke, I [John] was about to write [down the things I heard the thunderous voices say]; but I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down [because they are for an appointed time, for those who 'have ears to hear' what I have say].'"** (Revelation 10:4, insertions mine)

The seven thunders are seven announcements which Jesus will speak during the Great Tribulation. We know the 144,000 will speak the "testimony of Jesus," but the seven thunders are not messages conveyed through human beings. *Jesus Himself will speak seven times during the Great Tribulation in a way that is reminiscent of how He spoke seven times while hanging on the cross.* Although this time, John is not permitted to write down each announcement – even though he heard them and understood them. Jesus wants each person who receives the seal of God to hear his Master's voice with his own ears. Can you imagine the joy of actually hearing the voice of Jesus? Can you imagine

the joyful assurance the seven thunders will bring to those who are standing firm in their faith?

Consider this: If you hear a thunderous voice from Heaven and you understand the words that were spoken, *your own ears will confirm that you have been sealed!* In other words, the seven thunders are seven messages of assurance, hope, and encouragement. These seven thunders are for the benefit of the people who have been thoroughly tested and proven faith-full. As the Great Tribulation progresses, more and more people will be sealed and more and more people will hear and understand. I believe almost everyone who receives the seal of God will hear and understand at least one thunder! (I say “almost everyone” because the sealing process occurs over a period of 1,260 days and it is possible that some who are sealed could die before the next thunder occurs.)

This is a guess on my part, but it seems likely that the seven thunders could occur at seven moments of greatest anxiety and discouragement during the Great Tribulation. If so, the following potential scenario is offered for your consideration:

Thunder 1 When Jesus says, “No more delay” and the censer is cast down (possibly during a nuclear exchange?) The 144,000 will hear and understand this thunder because they have been sealed.

Thunder 2 During the first angel’s message (when persecution begins?)

Thunder 3 During second angel’s message (just before the fifth trumpet?)

Thunder 4 During third angel’s message (while the devil masquerades as God?)

Thunder 5 During the martyrdom of the saints (when a third of mankind is killed?)

Thunder 6 At the close of salvation (during the 3.5 days when the Two Witnesses are considered dead?)

Thunder 7 Just before the Second Coming (during the seventh bowl?)

Regardless of when the seven thunders occur, I believe those who have received the seal of God will hear and understand the seven thunders simultaneously all over the world and their courage will be renewed.

The Oath

“Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. And he swore [made a solemn promise] 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.’ But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God [the sealing] will be accomplished, just as he announced to his [144,000] servants the prophets.” (Revelation 10:5-7)

We briefly considered the importance of this oath when we were discussing the identity of the mighty angel. There are two more points about this oath that need to be presented, so please bear with me.

First, we already know that Michael swears by Himself because He is God – just like the Father is God. As the Creator of everything that exists, there is no higher power. (See also Isaiah 45:23, Jeremiah 22:5, Colossians 1:16, Ephesians 1:9,10.) Do not confuse the divinity of Jesus with His voluntary submission to the Father’s authority for the purpose of man’s salvation. Even though Jesus surrendered His prerogatives to the Father to save mankind, Jesus is just as much God as is the Father. (Revelation 11:17) So, the question rises, why does the command, **“There will be no more delay,”** require a solemn oath?

When the perfect time arrives for the administration of God’s wrath, Jesus will make a solemn promise to the Father to faithfully and completely carry out all of the objectives which the Father embedded into the plan of salvation. For example, Jesus will have to administer the Father’s wrath (seven redemptive judgments and seven destructive judgments), Jesus must ensure that the gospel will be presented to every person, and that every soul will be tested. Jesus will have to release the devil from the abyss and execute vengeance on the wicked – all this without any deviation from the plan which the Father gave Jesus. Most of all, Jesus promises to seal every person who is willing to obey the gospel. In other words, when Jesus declares there will be no more delay, *Jesus promises the Father that His plan for salvation will be carried out without the slightest deviation.* Therefore, one God (Jesus) swears to fully carry out the will of a second God (the Father). Jesus loves each person (saints and sinners alike) beyond human comprehension, to the point that He would gladly give up His eternal life to save each person. Consequently, this assignment will be more difficult for Jesus in some ways than going to the cross! It will crush

Jesus' heart, full of love and grace, to do what He has to do. In spite of this heavy burden, He promises to faithfully discharge His duties.

The second point that comes from this oath may seem oblique at first because we are not presently studying the book of Daniel, but it is important nonetheless. Daniel and John saw Jesus take the same oath and Daniel's view of this scene adds some details that are very helpful: **“The man clothed in linen [Jesus], who was [standing] above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him *swear* by him who lives forever, saying, ‘It [the gospel] will be [preached throughout the world] for a time, times and half a time [1,260 days]. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken [that is, when the 144,000 are slain], all these things [that I am required to do] will be completed.’ I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, ‘My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?’ He replied, ‘[you don’t need to be concerned about this] Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.’”** (Daniel 12:7-9, italics and insertion mine)

The oath in Daniel 12:7-9 and the oath in Revelation 10:6 align and through this alignment we learn two things. First, “the power of the holy people” will be broken. This is Daniel's way of describing the slaughter of the 144,000. When the empowerment of the Two Witnesses is terminated, most, if not all, of the 144,000 will be killed. (**Note:** 1,260 days equals a time, times, and half a time.) Second, the oath recorded in Daniel 12:7 forces the fulfillment of Daniel 11:36-12:13 to occur during the last days of Earth's history. In other words, the oath in Daniel 12 aligns with the oath in Revelation 10 and this forces the prophecy in Daniel 10-12 to cover twenty-six centuries. Daniel 10 begins during the time of the Persians and Daniel 12 ends at the Second Coming. These chronological matters were discussed in detail in Chapter 8 of my book, *Daniel: Unlocked for the Final Generation*, and they are mentioned here to refresh in your mind that the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation operate in lock-step. When Daniel and Revelation are properly put together, they form a precise matrix of events that shows us what has happened and what will surely come to pass.

The Scroll

The apostle John is treated in Revelation 10 and 11 as though he is one of the 144,000. Remember that God uses this literary device so that much can be said about the experience of the 144,000 using very few words. **“Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to**

me once more: ‘Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.’ So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, ‘Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’ I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told, ‘You must prophesy *again* about [before] many peoples, nations, languages and kings.’” (Revelation 10:8-11, italics and insertion mine)

After His resurrection, Jesus was given authority as the Head of His Church. (Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 1:18) On the basis of this authority, Jesus gave the gospel commission to His disciples just before He left Earth (Matthew 28:19,20), and the gospel of Jesus has been proclaimed for about 2,000 years. Over the past twenty centuries, the gospel has become contaminated with the traditions and opinions of men. Today, there are hundreds of variations on what actually constitutes the gospel of Jesus! During the Great Tribulation, the 144,000 will be solely responsible for the gospel commission. One gospel that perfectly aligns with the plumb line of God’s law will be delivered to the world and it will be free of traditions or opinions of men. The written Word (the Bible) and the spoken Word (the testimony of Jesus) will work together. The Bible will be studied and Jesus will be heard! (Revelation 1:9, 19:10) The Holy Spirit will be pounding on every heart – demanding that every sinner submit to the law of God!

John, representing the 144,000, was told, “You must prophesy (preach the gospel) *again*.” The eternal gospel of Jesus has not changed (Revelation 14:6), but after 2,000 years of “man-handling,” today’s versions of the gospel are badly distorted. Therefore, the gospel must be corrected and given *again*. The little scroll which John receives contains the *pure* gospel – the words of God which 144,000 prophets will speak.

Jesus warned His disciples, “**Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.**” (Matthew 10:17-20, italics mine)

One last, but emphatic point to remember: Theologians, scholars, pastors, priests, clergy, teachers, etc. **will not be speaking for Jesus** during the Great Tribulation **unless** they are among the 144,000, because no one else receives the scroll!

Measuring the Temple

After eating the scroll (which represents the testimony of Jesus), John was told to “prophesy again” and it is this final proclamation of the *true* gospel of Christ that will determine the size of the inner court of the temple (those near to God). **“I was given a reed like a measuring rod [a yardstick] and was told, ‘Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there.’”** (Revelation 11:1) The difference between the inner court and the outer court of the temple warrants a little explanation. Prior to its destruction in A.D. 70, the temple in Jerusalem had two courts. “Pure Jews” could enter the inner court (the area closest to God) and Gentile converts, considered “impure Jews,” had to stay in the outer court (an area farther away from God). This practice stemmed from the law of Moses: **“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. No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation. . . . Do not abhor an Edomite [the descendants of Esau], for he is your brother. Do not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as an alien in his country. The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord.”** (Deuteronomy 23:2,3,7,8, insertion mine)

John was given a yardstick and told to measure the inner court. Putting the pieces together, this language means that the gospel will be proclaimed *again* by the 144,000 and the plumb line of God’s Word will determine who is close to God and who is not – regardless of religious background. Those who listen to the Holy Spirit and receive the Truth will be counted as the inner court. Those who reject the law of God and the Holy Spirit will not be counted as God’s children. In fact, the outer court (people having some form of godliness) will not even be counted because these people refuse to “line up” with the plumb line of God’s Word. Obviously, a person cannot obey the Holy Spirit and reject the law of God. This is why John was told, **“But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.”** (Revelation 11:2)

During the Great Tribulation, people who love Truth and righteousness will openly denounce their past religious views and embrace the gospel of Jesus. Speaking figuratively, these honest-hearted people will then enter “the inner court” of God’s temple (the area closest to God) and God will recognize them as “pure Jews.” (Revelation 2:9) Because of their faithfulness to the demands of the gospel, the righteousness of Christ will be imparted to these sinners (their carnal natures removed) and they will receive the wedding garment, the seal of God. There is no need to “measure” the outer court because no sinner, on his own, “measures up” to the righteousness required for salvation. Remember the fate of the man at the wedding banquet who did not have the wedding garment?

Two Holy Cities

Currently, God has two holy cities. One is in Heaven and the other is on Earth. The one in Heaven has physical dimensions (Revelation 21:15-17) and its construction includes precious metals, pearls, and gem stones. (Revelation 21:18-21) The city in Heaven is called “*New Jerusalem*” because it replaces the original Jerusalem. God’s second holy city is on Earth, but it is not a physical city. It is a group of honest-hearted people who live all over the world. These people are called *citizens* of God’s kingdom on Earth. (Ephesians 2:19)

Many people erroneously think that the “holy city” trampled on in Revelation 11:2 is the original city of Jerusalem. They believe a large horde of Gentiles (Palestinians, Arabs, Russians, etc.) will attack Jerusalem at some point during the Great Tribulation. It is always possible that Jerusalem will experience another attack. Jerusalem has been attacked countless times throughout the centuries, but the “holy city” mentioned in Revelation 11:2 has nothing to do with the city of Jerusalem. The “holy city” in Revelation 11:2 represents God’s people.

When Israel rejected the Messiah, Jesus redefined Israel. For the past 2,000 years, the Bible declares a “Jew” to be anyone who submits to the teachings of Christ. (Romans 2:28,29; Galatians 3:28,29) Conversely, a Gentile is defined as anyone who refuses to submit to the teachings of Christ. This means that the city of Jerusalem today for the most part is a Gentile city, since most Jews do not believe in or submit to Jesus Christ. Therefore, most of the people living in Jerusalem today are Gentiles in God’s sight! (Revelation 2:9)

There is another city mentioned in the book of Revelation. It is called “*Babylon, city of power.*” (Revelation 18:10) This title reflects the great authority and power that Babylon will impose on the people of Earth.

In its day, ancient Babylon was a “city of power.” Until he spent seven years eating grass, the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, had no equal in arrogance and authority. (Daniel 5:18-21) Babylon (the Gentiles) will persecute God’s people (the holy city) for forty-two months. No one will be able to withstand the persecution unless the Holy Spirit enables them to stand firm in their faith!

Babylon’s forthcoming persecution and destruction of the saints parallels the experience of Jesus. The Jews did everything possible to destroy Jesus, but Jesus overcame them by going to His death. In this fallen world, victory is pinned on life, but in God’s economy, victory is pinned on dying without guilt. (1 John 5:4; Revelation 12:11) A God of love will permit the devil and his forces to conquer and kill millions of saints because He wants the universe to see that life itself must ever remain secondary to the law of love. Truth and righteousness are greater than life and they must be loved more than life. When a person allows the Holy Spirit to take control of his life, that person is given grace to live and die (if necessary) for something greater than himself. This produces a huge contrast. The wicked will prostitute their core beliefs and receive the mark of the beast to avoid death, but the saints would rather die than give up their love and faith in God.

The Two Lampstands and the Two Olive Trees

“And [Jesus said to John] I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy [on my behalf] for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth [a coarse fabric, not pleasant to wear, indicating a time of great upheaval and distress]. These [the Two Witnesses] are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand [that is, they are positioned] before the [throne of the] Lord of the earth.” (Revelation 11:3,4) How can two lampstands and two olive trees (four objects) in Heaven serve as Two Witnesses on Earth? Before we address this question, a short study from the book of Zechariah is necessary because the identity of the Two Witnesses is explained and demonstrated there.

A Really Neat Story

The Babylonian Empire fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. About two years later, Darius I (the king of the Medes who ruled over the province of Babylon) died. The death of Darius I enabled Cyrus (who had been king of the Persians for several years) to become sovereign over the province of Babylon. When Cyrus learned (perhaps through Daniel) that the Most High God of the Jews had called him by name 150 years before he was born and appointed him to rebuild His temple, Cyrus was deeply impressed with the God of the Jews. (See

Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-6.) The timing of Darius' death could not have been more perfect because Cyrus inherited the province of Babylon. In other words, a Persian king was put in a position where he could set the Jews free from a province that was formerly governed by a Mede and restore them to Judea. Because Cyrus ruled over Judea and Babylon during the seventieth year of Israel's captivity, the restoration of the Jews became possible through one man. With God, timing is everything.

“In the first year [536 B.C.] of Cyrus king of Persia [that is, as ruler over the province of Babylon], in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah¹, the Lord *moved* the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: ‘This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you – may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem.” ’ ” (Ezra 1:1-3, italics mine and insertions mine)

Get out of Jail!

After Cyrus issued the decree, an excited group of 42,360 Jews departed Babylon for the ruins of Jerusalem. (Ezra 2:64) However, their excitement soon turned into despair because during their absence from Judea, powerful warlords had overtaken their homeland. Of course the squatters did not want more Jews returning to Judea, so they made the lives of the arriving Jews as difficult and miserable as possible. Nevertheless, the Jewish king, Zerubbabel, and Israel's high priest, Joshua, appointed Levites to begin rebuilding and restoring the temple. There was great rejoicing and celebrating among the Jews that following spring when the foundation of the temple was laid, but their joy didn't last long.

“Then the peoples [the warlords and the Canaanites] around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid

¹Prior to the Babylonian captivity, the Lord had spoken through Jeremiah: “ **“This whole country [of Judea] will become a desolate wasteland, and these [tribal] nations [of Israel] will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,’ declares the Lord, ‘and will make it desolate forever.’ ”** (Jeremiah 25:11,12, insertions mine)

to go on building [the temple and the city]. [For many years] **They hired counselors** [lobbyists] **to work against them** [the Jews] **and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius [II] king of Persia.** (Ezra 4:4,5 insertions mine)

Note: The resentment and actions of the squatters and warlords explains why three Persian kings had to issue four decrees to rebuild and restore Jerusalem and the temple over a period of ninety-three years. Cyrus gave the first decree in 536 B.C. Darius II, king of Persia (not to be confused with Darius I, the king of the Medes who put Daniel in the lion's den) issued a second decree in 519 B.C. Sixty-three years later, the Persian king, Artaxerxes, issued two decrees. His first decree was issued in 457 B.C. and the second was issued in 444 B.C.

Each time the Jews received permission to move forward, the devil found a way to thwart God's work and bring the process of rebuilding to a halt. Finally, in 515 B.C., the temple was completed. It was dedicated the following year (the Sabbath year of 514 B.C.) even though enhancements to the temple and the city of Jerusalem would not be completed for another seventy-five years. “. . .**They** [the Jews] **finished building the temple** [the basic structure] **according to the command of the God of Israel and the [four] decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign [515 B.C.] of King Darius** [that is, Darius II, king of Persia].” (Ezra 6:14,15, insertions mine)

Fourteen Years of Despair (534-521 B.C.)

Now that a brief overview has been given on the circumstances of rebuilding the temple and the city of Jerusalem, we need to go back and consider the despair which beset King Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, at the beginning of the story. The reconstruction of the temple was halted almost as soon as it was started and the project “lay dead” for fourteen years. The warlords mocked Zerubbabel and Joshua, and as time went by, these good men were considered impotent and inept by many of their own people. It is true that Zerubbabel and Joshua *appeared* impotent and inept to the natural eye, but they wisely waited on the Lord.

The reconstruction project stopped because the warlords sent letters of accusation (about the past behavior of the Jews) to King Cyrus and the king shut down the rebuilding project until matters could be reviewed and sorted out. There was nothing that Zerubbabel and Joshua could

do but wait. One does not run ahead of a sovereign king. Fourteen years is a long time to wait and Zerubbabel and Joshua knew that with each passing year, their opportunity to complete the task became more unlikely. During this period of “gridlock,” the Lord gave the prophet Zechariah several visions to encourage His people.

Of course, Jesus saw everything that was going on. He saw the lies and accusations of the warlords. He saw the devil’s effort to thwart the rebuilding of the temple. Jesus also saw the fragile condition (spiritually speaking) of those Jews who had returned to rebuild Jerusalem. In some ways, the generation that came out of Babylon was worse off than the generation that came out of Egypt. The Jews who came out of Babylon possessed a corrupt religion. They had mixed the laws of God and Moses with the pagan beliefs of the Babylonians and this created a toxic religion. To clean up this mess, *God designed the rebuilding of Jerusalem and His temple to purify the rebuilders.* He wanted to teach a new generation of Jews the importance of living by faith (doing what is right in God’s eyes without regard for the consequences) because without faith, it is impossible to please God! (Hebrews 11:6)

Jesus wanted the rebuilt Jerusalem to be a city founded on faith and inhabited by the “faith-full.” Jesus did not want Jerusalem established on human prowess and illusions of self-importance and self-righteousness. Therefore, Jesus put the exiles in a “tunnel of hopelessness.” (This is a helpless situation that is bad, narrow and confining. There is no way out, forward or backward, up or down. It is a foreboding place where gridlock stops everything but the mighty hand of God.) Almost immediately, God wanted the rebuilders to understand that human effort could not rebuild His temple and His city. There was absolutely nothing that the Jews could do about it. After a few years of hopeless gridlock, God spoke to His people through Zechariah:

“[For many good reasons,] **The Lord was very angry with your forefathers** [and according to His promise, He drove us from *His* land – Leviticus 25:23]. **Therefore** [the Lord said to me] **tell the people: ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Return to me,” declares the Lord Almighty, “and I will return to you,”’** [did you notice the order – return to me and I will return to you] **‘Do not be like your forefathers, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed: “This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices.’” But they would not listen or pay attention to me,’ declares the Lord.**” (Zechariah 1:2-4, insertions mine)

Basically, the Lord says, “If (consider the conditional nature of this offer) you return to me, I will bless you. I have many wonderful things in store for you.” “**Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming [to Earth], and I will live among you,**’ declares the Lord. ‘[A time is coming when] **Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and [many Gentile nations] will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem [as His dwelling place].**’” (Zechariah 2:10-12, insertions mine)

Israel left a bad taste in the mouths of the Canaanites. This bad taste can be assessed by the hatred which the Gentiles had for the returning Jews. The Canaanites did not want the Jews living in their midst and they did everything possible to keep them from rebuilding. During this period of gridlock, the Lord gave Zechariah a vision concerning Joshua and a vision concerning Zerubbabel. As High Priest, Joshua represented the religious condition of Israel and as king, Zerubbabel represented the political condition of Israel. Because the vision concerning Joshua does not directly concern the Two Witnesses, I will reluctantly skip over it. (See Zechariah 3.)

The Vision Concerning Zerubbabel

“**Then the angel who talked with me [earlier in the vision concerning Joshua] returned and wakened me, as a man is wakened from his sleep. He asked me, ‘What do you see?’ I answered, ‘I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights. Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.’ Then I asked the angel who talked with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ He answered, ‘Do you [Zechariah, a prophet of God] not know what these are?’ ‘No, my lord,’ I replied. So he said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: “Not by [human] might nor by [human] power, but by my Spirit [the temple will be rebuilt],” says the Lord Almighty.**’

‘**What are you, O mighty mountain [of warlords, gridlock and insurmountable difficulties]? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. [My Spirit will remove all of the roadblocks set by your adversaries and the temple will surely be rebuilt.] Then he [Zerubbabel, yes King Zerubbabel himself] will bring out the capstone [the finishing stone of the temple] to shouts of “God bless it! God bless it!”**’ Then the word of the Lord came to me: ‘The

hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. [Tell those who have no faith, those who doubt this vision that when they behold the completed temple] **Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you.'**

“Who despises the day of small things? [Who complains when troubles are few? God works best when everything else fails.] **Men will rejoice when they see** [once again] **the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.'** **‘(These seven** [the seven eyes on the stone set before Joshua] **are the eyes of the Lord, which range throughout the earth** [they are always on those who fear the Lord. Psalms 33:18].)’ **Then I asked the angel** [a second time], **‘What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?’** [After a few moments of unanswered silence] **Again I asked him** [a third time], **‘What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?’** **He replied, ‘Do you** [Zechariah, a prophet of Israel] **not know what these are?’** **‘No, my lord,’ I said. So he said, ‘These** [the two olive trees and the golden lampstand that stand before the Lord, they] **are the two** [witnesses] **who are anointed** [chosen] **to serve the Lord of all the earth.’**” (Zechariah 4:1-14, insertions mine)

Please notice two key points in this vision:

1. Even though the rebuilding project was in gridlock when God gave this vision to Zechariah, the Lord promised that Zerubbabel himself would present the capstone (the final stone on the temple) to shouts of “God bless it! God bless it!” Jesus wanted the king to know that he would indeed rebuild the temple and the obstacles he faced would be overcome, but not through human strength. **“‘Not by [human] might nor by [human] power, but by my Spirit [the temple will be rebuilt],’ says the Lord Almighty.”**
2. Twice, the angel avoided Zechariah’s question about the lampstand and the two olive trees. In fact, the angel’s response, “Do you not know what these are?” was a gentle rebuke because Zechariah, who was both a prophet and a priest, should have understood the meaning of what he saw.

We have reached bedrock in our study on the Two Witnesses. The Lord showed Zechariah a golden lampstand that had seven lamps on it. Two olive trees stood beside the lampstand, one on the left and the other on the right. Each olive tree had a golden pipe that was attached to the lampstand. In fact, the two pipes from the two trees fanned out into

seven channels so that each lamp on the lampstand received oil. The imagery is both elegant and simple. Olive oil perpetually flowed from the two living trees and this enables the lampstand to *shine* perpetually! What a marvelous design! Zechariah saw an eternal flame. A lampstand fed by two olive trees. (Remember, as we learned near the beginning of this study, the Two Witnesses have existed throughout eternity.)

Fresh olive oil was required for the seven lamps that made up the golden lampstand. (Exodus 25:31-40, Leviticus 23:3,4) Zechariah also knew that, **“The lamps on the pure gold lampstand [that stood] before the Lord must be tended [each day by humans] continually.”** (Leviticus 24:4, italics and insertion mine) Given his intimate knowledge of priestly duties, Zechariah should have connected the dots. He was looking at a living symbol of the Holy Spirit (the two olive trees) and the eternal flame of God’s Word (the lampstand with seven lamps on it). The Spirit of God enables the law of God to shine perpetually! **“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”** (Isaiah 55:10,11)

Standing before the Lord of the Earth

Notice the location of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11:4: **“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.”** The lampstand in Zechariah’s day was located on the south side of the Holy Place, directly across the room from the Table of Shewbread which was located on the north side of the Holy Place. The Table of Shewbread represents the throne of God.¹ Consequently, the lampstand *stood before* the Table of Shewbread or in temple language, the lampstand stood before the throne of God. In Zechariah’s vision, two olive trees were seen standing on each side of the lampstand, therefore, the two trees also *stood before the Lord*. When Zechariah pressed the angel a third time, the angel confirmed their importance saying, **“These [the two olive trees and the golden lampstand] are the two [witnesses] who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth [Sovereign God].”**

¹ For a study on the Table of Shewbread and God’s use of parallel temples, please see Chapters 11 and 12 in my book, *Jesus: the Alpha and The Omega*.

The Lampstand with Seven Lamps

When God gave this vision to Zechariah, the temple in Jerusalem was not in service. This point is made because the temple in Heaven was operating and intact. (Hebrews 8:1-5) Zechariah's vision should be understood from the perspective of the Heavenly temple, where the Lord sits on His throne. (Psalm 11:4) The lampstand in Heaven's temple represented the nation of Israel, the *agent* through whom God's law was chosen to shine. The seven lamps on the lampstand represent the totality of God's Truth, the truth that displaces darkness, including the plumb line of His law that defines true vertical.

Because of God's great affection for Abraham, Abraham's offspring had been chosen as "keepers of the Word of God." They were trustees of His law. In other words, when Israel was delivered from Egypt, the nation was chosen to serve the world as trustees of the gospel of Christ. (Exodus 19:4-6, 1 Corinthians 10:4) Jesus referred to this responsibility in His Sermon on the Mount. Jesus told the Jews, "**You are the light [the lampstand] of the world. . . .**" (Matthew 5:14, insertion mine) In other words, Israel had been selected and anointed to serve the Lord of all Earth as trustees of God's Word. (Isaiah 42:6,7; Revelation 14:6) This explains why a single lampstand was placed *before the Lord's throne in the Heavenly temple*. That lampstand was a constant reminder before the Lord that Israel needed Holy Spirit power every day to take the light of truth (the perfect law of God) into all the world. "**I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. 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 free captives from prison [of sin] and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness [of ignorance].**" (Isaiah 42:6,7, italics and insertions mine)

The seven lamps on Israel's lampstand represent the sevenfold brilliance that shines from God's Word. No group of people has been given more blessing and spiritual advantage than the nation of Israel! Paul, lamenting Israel's defiant rebellion against Christ wrote, "**For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons;¹ theirs the divine glory,² the covenants,³ the receiving of the law,⁴ the temple worship⁵ and the promises.⁶ Theirs are the patriarchs,⁷ and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.**" (Romans 9:3-5) Did you notice the little

superscript numbers? These numbers identify the sevenfold blessing given to Israel. God raised up a people to “prepare the world for the kingdom of God and He gave them every blessing and grace to do so, but they refused. **“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”** (John 1:11)

When Jesus began His ministry, Israel was thoroughly poisoned with idolatry. Israel worshiped God’s laws instead of God, and their legalism led them to reject the teachings of Jesus. If Jesus came to Earth to minister among Christians today, He would find Christians thoroughly poisoned with idolatry. A majority of Christians worship God’s grace instead of God! This point is proven by the total disregard for God’s seventh day Sabbath. Most Christians disregard God’s Sabbath because they believe the Ten Commandments were abolished at the cross. The pendulum has swung from worshiping God’s law to worshiping God’s grace. In fact, mercy (grace) and justice (law) co-exist because God is love. (Psalm 89:14) Man’s need of God’s grace is based on the eternal presence of God’s law. Where there is no law, there is no need for grace! (Romans 4:15) When the Ten Commandments, specifically the fourth commandment, is presented to the world during the Great Tribulation, many Christians will be shocked to hear that they have blasphemed the law of God in the name of Grace. Although the doctrine of grace opposes the doctrine of legalism, they produce the same outcome. Anything that displaces the law of God with rules taught by men is blasphemy. (Isaiah 29:13; Mark 7:7,8)

Israel’s Failures

Israel’s history is one of apostasy, time and time again. After the Babylonian captivity, Israel’s apostasy went from bad to worse. Instead of becoming a people who loved God with all their hearts, minds, and souls and their neighbors as themselves, Israel’s religion was hijacked by a sect of religious zealots (the Pharisees) who created a corrupted version of Judaism that was worse than before. Instead of worshiping and exalting the God of Heaven, they ended up worshiping and exalting false religion. Of course, if you had asked a Pharisee if he hated God, he would have indignantly said, “Absolutely not!” If you had asked him at the crucifixion if he hated Jesus of Nazareth, (who was God in the flesh) he would have said “Yes, absolutely!” As I have written before, the devil’s ultimate deception occurs when people believe right is wrong and wrong is right.

Jesus deliberately chose to begin His ministry at the peak of Israel’s apostasy. In spite of the signs and wonders Jesus performed, Israel

rejected Him because He spoke the Word of God. **“He [the Word] was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.”** (John 1:10, insertion mine) Because Israel wanted nothing to do with the Word of God or the gospel commission, Jesus abolished His covenant with Israel. He divorced Himself from the biological offspring of Abraham with this decree: **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house [of worship] is left to you desolate [empty]. [As a nation you have no further part or place in my plans.] For I tell you, you will not see me [striving to win your hearts] again [I will not be found by this people] until you [see me sitting beside the Father and are forced by my consuming glory to] say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its [magnificent] buildings. ‘Do you see all these things?’ he asked. ‘I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down [in A.D. 70 by the Romans].’ ”** (Matthew 23:37-24:2, see also Matthew 26:64. Insertions mine)

The bottom line is sad, but simple: The trusteeship of the gospel was taken from Israel and given to Christians. Israel’s lampstand was removed and seven lampstands took its place!

Christianity: The Seven Lampstands

When Jesus terminated His covenant with Israel, He created a new and better covenant (Hebrews 8:6), and all who choose to enter into this covenant constitute a *new* Israel who will inherit *New* Jerusalem. Jesus established a new covenant because He wants His gospel of salvation and truth delivered to the whole world. (Note: God loves the Gentiles just as much as He loves those who are called to labor for the Gentiles! Romans 3:29) The transition from the old covenant to the new covenant confuses a lot of people. Here are two important things that every Christian should understand about this transition:

First, the promises and prophecies given to ancient Israel under the old covenant were abandoned when the old covenant was terminated. This means that since the cross, God recognizes Israel as a Gentile nation. Israel lost their favored status, their trusteeship, through rebellion. Because God’s covenant with Israel was a mutual covenant (like a marriage), God was set free from Israel because Israel was unfaithful.

(Ezekiel 23) Many Christians do not understand the bilateral nature of God's covenant with Abraham's offspring. To make matters worse, they do not understand the termination of the old covenant with its promises and prophecies, and as a result, they continue to lift passages from the Old Testament and apply them to the end time.¹ This errant practice has produced a series of prophetic concepts that are totally misleading. Millions of people are now anticipating prophetic events that will not occur.

The second issue that confuses a lot of people today is the identity of Israel. The new covenant *redefines* the seed (the sperm) of Abraham. **“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”** (Galatians 3:28,29) God redefined Israel because God's covenant with Abraham is not conditional. The covenant God gave to Abraham was unilateral – one sided. Jesus made three promises to Abraham which He will keep. First, He promised that Abraham would become the father of many nations. (Genesis 17:4) Second, God told Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his offspring. (Genesis 18:18) Last, God promised to give the land where Abraham lived to his descendants. (Genesis 15:18) Notice how these three promises will be fulfilled: At the Second Coming, a numberless multitude from every kindred, tribe, and nation will be redeemed because they put their faith in Christ *just like Abraham*. (Revelation 7:9) Thus, Abraham will be called the father of the “faithful” from many nations. When the New Jerusalem descends from Heaven at the end of the 1,000 years, it will physically encompass *all of the land* promised to Abraham. (Revelation 21:16) Thus, Abraham's seed will inherit the land. Finally, because Jesus came through Abraham's lineage, people from every nation will be saved and this fulfills the promise that all nations would be blessed through Abraham's offspring. (Acts 4:12; Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 2) All three promises made to Abraham will be fulfilled – but not with Abraham's biological offspring!

Paul leaves no wiggle room on the redefinition of Israel: **“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) **“If you belong to Christ, then you**

¹ For further study on “What Was Nailed to the Cross?” and “God's Covenants,” please see Chapters 7 and 8 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*.

are Abraham's seed [the Greek word for seed is *sperma*], **and** [as a descendant of Abraham you are] **heirs according to the promise** [which God gave to Abraham]." (Galatians 3:29, insertions mine) So, many Christians are grossly misled on this topic. *Modern Israel has no prophetic role or spiritual importance during the end time.* On the other hand, *the new Israel* – the Israel redefined by the new covenant – will take center stage. The *new Israel* is both the target of Lucifer and the bride of Christ which Jesus is coming back to receive. At the Second Coming, Jesus will "airlift" Abraham and all of his faith-full heirs (both from the dead and the living) to live in the New Jerusalem!

Paul understood God's abandonment of biological Israel. He also understood the redefinition of Israel, that is, the Christian church was the new Israel. **"Then Paul and Barnabas answered them** [a group of abusive Jews] **boldly: 'We had to speak the word of God to you first** [because you are close to the truth, but so far away from Christ. However,] **Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us** [Christians]: **"I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."**' When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. *The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.*" (Acts 13:47-49, italics and insertions mine) Notice how Paul and Barnabas redirected Isaiah 42:6,7 toward the Christian faith.

Removing One and Installing Seven

The abandonment of Israel and the establishment of Christianity has been briefly discussed in this study so that you can understand why seven lampstands replaced the lampstand that once stood before the Lord in Heaven's temple. The seven lampstands represent *a new covenant – a new trusteeship for the gospel of Christ.* **"It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel [Jacob] are Israel [God's children]. . . . In other words, it is not the natural children [of Jacob] who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise** [people who live by faith as did Abraham] **who are regarded as Abraham's offspring."** (Romans 9:6,8) Unlike the old covenant which was based on bloodline, the new covenant is an open covenant. It is based on the blood of Jesus. Anyone can become a believer in Christ, and through Jesus, receive all that was promised to Abraham!

You should now be able to see why seven golden lampstands replaced Israel's lampstand. John writes, **“On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: ‘Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.’ I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw *seven golden lampstands*, and among the lampstands was someone ‘like a son of man,’ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.”** (Revelation 1:10-15, italics mine)

Even though there were more than seven churches in Asia Minor in A.D. 95 when God gave John this vision, Jesus chose these specific seven churches to represent *the whole of Christianity*. Together, the seven churches had all of the strengths and problems that every Christian church faces. Jesus foreknew that some Christians would fall into the Ephesus experience, that is, they would lose their first love. Jesus also foreknew that some Christians would have the Laodicean experience, that is, they would become lukewarm – distracted from the rigor of living by faith through the comforts of pleasure and wealth. Other Christians would be corrupted by sexual immorality like Thyatira and Pergamum. In A.D. 95, Jesus selected seven churches (seven is a whole number in God's system of counting) – six churches having serious problems and one church hanging on under very difficult circumstances – so that He could praise the good and identify the bad in each case. Unfortunately, the testimony of Jesus to the seven churches did not keep the seven churches from falling into apostasy.

Before we go a step farther, notice that Jesus threatened the church at Ephesus with abandonment. **“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.**

Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. *If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.*” (Revelation 2:1-5, italics mine)

Given that Israel’s lampstand had been removed at the end of the seventy weeks, the words of Jesus must be treated seriously. His threat, even though directed at Ephesus, also holds true for the other six churches because Ephesus was a part of the whole – one of the seven. I am highlighting this threat because the seven churches did not last long. They turned their backs on the Lord during the next seventy weeks (490 years). By A.D. 538, Christianity was in total apostasy.

The history of Christianity does not address or lament the disappearance of the seven churches. However, we know they ceased to exist for several reasons: First, Roman Caesars, Decius (A.D. 249-251) and Diocletian (A.D. 284-305), issued decrees that all Christians in the Roman empire were to be exterminated. Second, if any of the seven churches escaped these purges, they either acquiesced to the demands of Constantine (A.D. 306-337) and the heresies taught by the Church at Rome, or they simply disappeared and went underground. Finally, Islamic conquests in Asia Minor during the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. terminated the existence of all Christian churches in a region that is modern day Turkey. Even though the seven churches disappeared, God’s Word was not totally extinguished. **“The woman [faithful believers] fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.”** (Revelation 12:6)

By the sixth century A.D., the Christian church in Rome was powerful, full of heresy, and willing to destroy anyone who rebelled against its authority. The church’s slide into apostasy parallels Israel’s history. History proves that human beings, whether Jew or Christian, are the same. We have already discussed the fall of Israel and the disappearance of the seven churches. Those loving the Word of God went underground because the devil chased the woman into the wilderness for 1,260 years. During this millennium of persecution, history describes two versions of Christianity. One church is lavishly headquartered at Rome and the other church is destitute, hiding in the desert. The world is in the dark and which is why this period of time is often called the Dark Ages. (538-1798)

Lampstand Summary

We have seen how lampstands are used in prophecy. In Zechariah's day, there was one lampstand with seven lamps on it that stood before the Lord. That lampstand represented the nation of Israel, the *chosen agent* or trustee of God's Word. In John's day, there were seven lampstands, each lampstand representing a church – the *chosen agent* or trustee of God's Word. Then, the seven lampstands disappeared. Now, we ask, who are the two lampstands in Revelation 11? God's law is His *chosen agent* at the end of the Age. God has proven with Jews and Christians alike that human beings cannot be trusted as agents of His law. One lampstand represents the first tablet of stone and the other represents the second tablet of stone. The law of the Lord is changeless, a perfect light displacing darkness. The law of God is the plumb line of Truth. The law is found and explained in the Word of God and it testifies about the actions of the living. Our actions during the Great Tribulation will be measured by the law's definition of true vertical (the Truth).

One last point. When we studied the seven seals, we learned that the second seal was opened in 1800. The rider on the red horse went throughout Earth with a large sword. That sword represents the Word of God which has been widely translated and distributed throughout the world. God raised up numerous Bible Societies at the beginning of the nineteenth century for the purpose of distributing His Word. In Revelation 11, the purpose for distributing the Bible becomes self-evident. The Word of God (or portions of it) has been distributed throughout the world. When the Great Tribulation begins, the Holy Spirit will empower 144,000 to proclaim God's law. The 144,000 will present the law of God with clarity and great power, and sincere people will be "cut to the heart" through the power of the Holy Spirit. The wicked will be enraged by the law of God and they will persecute those who obey the gospel of Christ. To take this one step further, Jesus Himself will speak through the 144,000. The testimony of Jesus will be heard and this will cause people to give God's law due consideration. Make no mistake about this, the gospel of Jesus will be preached, as a witness to all nations, and then the end shall come. (Matthew 24:14)

Two Olive Trees: Early Rain / Latter Rain

There were two major harvests each year in ancient Israel. The first harvest came from winter crops which were harvested in the spring. First fruits from the winter crops were presented to the Lord at the Feast of Weeks (also called the Feast of Pentecost) The second harvest

came from summer crops which were harvested in the fall. First fruits from the fall harvest were presented to the Lord at the Feast of Ingathering (the Feast of Tabernacles). (Exodus 23:16; 34:22) Given Israel's latitude in the northern hemisphere, the fall harvest was the largest and most abundant.

Generally speaking, there were two cycles of rain per crop. They were called "the early rain" and "the latter rain." (Joel 2:23) It is important to note that the names of the two rains were relative to their harvest, not the time of the year. This topic is important because the Holy Spirit is represented as Two Trees in Revelation 11. The work of the Holy Spirit can be described as two rains. (James 5:7) The first "rain" of the Holy Spirit is to engage us spiritually. The Holy Spirit "rains down" on everyone at birth and this gift from God demonstrates His great compassion for fallen man – long before we could even know or want to know Him.

God wants every sinner to become a spiritual being. He wants us to overcome sin and live victorious lives. He is not willing that any person should be lost. (2 Peter 3:9) The problem is that fallen man does not naturally feel any need a Savior, but our need of a Savior is far greater than that of having a "warm fuzzy." We need a Savior to give us power to do what is right when the price for righteousness is great. We need a Savior who empowers us to forgive our debtors and love the unlovely. We need a Savior who will comfort us for doing right – even though the heavens may fall. Most of all, we need a Savior who has died in our place and paid the penalty for our sins. There is great peace and joy in having a Savior.

The Holy Spirit is anxious that we hear the gospel of Jesus because the truth about Jesus and our need of the Savior comes from hearing the Word of God. (Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21) After hearing the terms and conditions of the gospel, the Holy Spirit is sometimes able to bring a person to repentance. The Spirit enables us to see ourselves as God sees us and this view is rather shocking. Suddenly, our need for a Savior becomes upmost!

Once a person totally surrenders his will to Jesus and His teachings, the Holy Spirit causes the "born again experience" to occur. The born again experience is like *the early rain* in ancient Israel. Just before the early rain came, seeds were planted, and of course, the early rain and the sunshine that followed caused the seeds to germinate and grow. In a few days, the bare ground produced new life! Once the seed of truth is planted in good soil, the Holy Spirit will "rain down" on a thirsty soul

and overnight, signs of new life will appear. This is the “early rain” experience.

Whether it is a summer crop (representing early in life) or a winter crop (representing late in life), the rain that produces the harvest is the latter rain. The world has never experienced the latter rain of the Holy Spirit, but it will only occur during the Great Tribulation. For 1,260 days, the law of God will be presented with power and clarity, and the Holy Spirit will pound on every heart. The contest will be difficult and painful. Those who submit to the law of God will suffer the penalties of Babylon. Those who submit to the laws of Babylon will receive the seven bowls and lose eternal life. Each person’s decision will be thoroughly tested. When a person passes his test of faith, the righteousness of Christ will be *imparted* to that person. The Holy Spirit will remove the carnal nature and seal that “faith-full” person with a sinless nature like that of Adam and Eve before they fell. (Genesis 3:7; Colossians 1:27; Romans 1:17; Revelation 7:1-4; 10:7) The sealing will be caused by the latter rain experience. This experience is also called “receiving the seal of the living God.” (Revelation 7:2) When Jesus concludes the sealing of His people, the saints will no longer need an intercessor or mediator in Heaven. The sins of the righteous will have been transferred to the scapegoat and God’s children will have sinless natures “sealed” within them. Jesus will then declare the end of His judgment bar with this declaration: **“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) These words declare the latter rain has fallen and the harvest is finished.

Review

We have examined the following:

1. John saw Jesus descend from Heaven to take control of Earth and select the 144,000.
2. John, representing one of the 144,000, is given a little book to eat. This book, like the book given to Ezekiel, contains the words which the 144,000 will speak during the Great Tribulation.
3. Jesus will take an oath, promising the Father that He will carry out the plans given to Him. Jesus then declares there will be no more delay. The censer comes down. The first four trumpets begin.
4. John, as one of the 144,000, is told to prophesy again (preach a true

gospel). The 144,000 will notify the world that the judgment bar of Christ is underway.

5. John was given a measuring rod and told to count the inner court and to ignore the outer court. The inner court will consist of sheep. The outer court will be filled with goats.
6. Jesus will empower His Two Witnesses for 1,260 days.
7. The Two Witnesses are the two lampstands and the two olive trees that stand before Him in Heaven's temple. The two olive trees represent the two "rains" of the Holy Spirit. The two lampstands represent the two tablets of the Ten Commandments.
8. The power given to the Two Witnesses will flow through the 144,000. In other words, the Two Witnesses will speak and work through the 144,000 to save as many souls as possible.

Now that we have a basic understanding of John's experience as one of the 144,000, as well as the identity and role of the Two Witnesses, the rest of the story in Revelation 11 is not difficult to understand.

The Rest of the Story

“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy [through the 144,000] for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth [during distressing circumstances]. These are the two olive trees [the two phases of the Holy Spirit's work] and the two lampstands [the Ten Commandments, written on two tablets of stone] that stand before [that is, these items are positioned before] the Lord of the earth [who rules from His temple in Heaven]. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies [At the appointed time, God will destroy those who reject the testimony of His Witnesses with fire]. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.” (Revelation 11:3-5; 20:15)

The Bible and the Holy Spirit will be *supernaturally* empowered for 1,260 days. The world has never seen the “latter rain power” of the Holy Spirit or a situation like the one that will be caused by the first four trumpets. God's wrath will tear down the foolishness that preoccupies people, and overnight, the Bible will become the most important book on Earth. For 1,260 days, 144,000 servants of God will be “gifted” with the empowerment of God's Two Witnesses and a great contest for souls will unfold. There will be intense hatred for those who choose to obey God, but there will be genuine love among those who

receive the gospel of Jesus. Were it not for the special protection which the Holy Spirit will give the 144,000, they would be easy prey. In fact, wicked men would kill the 144,000 long before they could accomplish their task. I believe the language, **“If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies”** means the 144,000 will remain *invincible* until they have completed their God-given work. (See Jeremiah 5:14.) God does not allow anything to stop them from their mission until their job is done and the caricature of a fire breathing monster indicates their invincibility.

In ancient times, when it was believed that Earth was flat, sailors believed that fire-breathing dragons lived under Earth. If a ship sailed too far out in the ocean, the sailors believed it would be consumed by fire breathing beasts which men could not destroy. (See Job 40.) The phrase, **“This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.”** is a divine promise. Even though the 144,000 cannot be killed until their work is done, those attempting to harm God’s servants will be treated by God as though they did harm them because that was their intent. The destiny of these wicked people will be death by fire at the Second Coming (Revelation 19:20) or at the end of 1,000 years. (Revelation 20:15)

“These [the Two Witnesses] men [the word “men” is supplied by translators, it is not in the Greek text] have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying [See 1 Kings 17:1. The Holy Spirit told King Ahab through the prophet Elijah there would be no more rain. God has used famine a number of times to punish nations for their rebellion. See also 2 Samuel 21, Jeremiah 11 and Ezekiel 5:12-17.]; and they [like Moses and Aaron, the 144,000 will] have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast [that is, the lamb-like beast in Revelation 13:11-18] that comes up from the Abyss [Lucifer, the Antichrist, who comes up out of the Abyss at the fifth trumpet. Revelation 9:1-11] will attack them, and overpower and kill them.” (Revelation 11:6,7)

Note: In the chapter on the seven trumpets, we investigated the first global earthquake at length – the earthquake that marks the commencement of the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 8:5) I presented the idea that the first global earthquake will break up the world into 144,000 cells with one of the 144,000 located in each cell. We also investigated the destruction of one third of mankind during the sixth

trumpet. (Revelation 9:15) You may recall that Lucifer sets up his theocracy during the sixth trumpet and all who refuse to abandon their religion and worship him as Lord of lords and King of kings, will be targeted for slaughter. (Revelation 13:15)

These matters congeal in a simple way. When everyone in a given cell has firmly made their decision – for or against the gospel – the prophet working that cell will have completed his assignment. Because everyone in each geographic cell has either been sealed or received the mark of the beast, the work and influence of the Two Witnesses will end. Lucifer’s forces will then be permitted to kill most, if not all, of the 144,000. If any of the 144,000 remain alive, they will not be able to work miracles or speak with power after the 1,260th day. I do not expect all of the 144,000 to die on the same day. However, I do believe that most, if not all, of God’s servants will be dead on or before the 1,260th day of the Great Tribulation.

It was the custom in ancient times for kings to leave the bodies of their enemy lying in the streets to show contempt for their rebellion. In this sense, **“Their bodies** [of the 144,000, the arms and legs of the Two Witnesses] **will lie in the street of the great city** [the great whore, the universal city of “Babylon the Great”], **which is figuratively called Sodom** [because she is like Sodom, full of people controlled by passions of greed and sexual immorality] **and Egypt** [who, like Pharaoh, hardened his heart ten times], **where also their Lord was crucified.** [Jesus was not crucified in Sodom or Egypt, however, Jesus did say that, spiritually speaking, Jerusalem was worse than Sodom and Egypt! Luke 10:12; 11:31,32] **For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation** [all over the world] **will gaze on their bodies** [of God’s servants] **and refuse them burial.** (Revelation 11:8)

Since this topic was addressed near the beginning of this study, two summary points will be made. First, the great city is the great whore, Lucifer’s theocracy, which will be set up during the sixth trumpet. (Revelation 17:18) Lucifer’s theocracy is also called “the image to the beast” – a modified replica of Babylon’s original church-state. (Revelation 13:15) The great city is not a geographical location on Earth. Instead, the great city is a governing system that encompasses the whole world. In other words, the bodies of the Two Witnesses (actually, the bodies of the 144,000 through whom the Two Witnesses speak) are not going to be viewed at a particular street address in a given city. Geographically speaking, the dead bodies of the 144,000 will

be found *all over the world*.

Second, the language, “bodies lying in the street,” shows gross contempt. Consider these two passages which speak of God’s anger toward Israel: **“Therefore the Lord’s anger burns against his people; his hand is raised and he strikes them down. The mountains shake, and *the dead bodies are like refuse in the streets*. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.”** (Isaiah 5:25)

“Therefore, this is what the Lord says about the prophets who are prophesying in my name: I did not send them, yet they are saying, ‘No sword or famine will touch this land.’ Those same prophets will perish by sword and famine. And *the people they are prophesying to will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem* because of the famine and sword. There will be *no one to bury them* or their wives, their sons or their daughters. I will pour out on them the calamity they deserve.” (Jeremiah 14:15,16, italics mine)

When the 144,000 are killed, no one will care enough to even bury them. The wicked will despise the 144,000 and the remaining saints will be hiding from the wicked. Finally, notice that Jesus will avenge the death of His servants. (Jeremiah 51:6; Revelation 18:6) When Jesus arrives at the Second Coming, He will throw the beast (the leopard-like beast, Babylon) and the false prophet (Lucifer) into a lake of fire and He will kill the remaining wicked with a command that comes out of His mouth. (Revelation 19:19-21) The bodies of the wicked will also lie in the street of the great city **“...and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.”** (Revelation 19:21) The righteous meet the Lord in the air before the wicked are slain. No one will be left on Earth to bury the dead.

Day 1,265

“The inhabitants of the earth will gloat [rejoice] over them [the bodies of the 144,000] and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. [For 1,260 days, the Holy Spirit and God’s Word will torment each person spiritually until he or she either (1) submits to the gospel of Jesus, or (2) grieves away the Holy Spirit and commits the unpardonable sin. (Revelation 14:11) By the time the 1,260th day is reached, every decision will have been made and a large majority will rejoice to be set free from the torment caused by the Two Witnesses.] **But** [their celebration over the deaths of the 144,000 will prove to be

premature because] **after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them** [the 144,000], **and they** [came to life and] **stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them** [the wicked, particularly those who participated in killing them]. (Revelation 11:10,11)

What is the point of gazing on the bodies of the 144,000 for three and one-half days? Why is there a fractional part of a day in this prophecy when all other prophetic time periods in Daniel and Revelation are given as whole days? There may be several reasons behind God's plan for doing this, but I can think of one. We know that God measures a day from sundown to sundown. (Genesis 1; Leviticus 23:32) For the sake of discussion, suppose the 1,260 days end on a Tuesday, February 3 at sundown (local time). About twelve hours later, at sunrise local time, Wednesday morning, February 4, Lucifer announces the 144,000 have been annihilated and the wicked begin celebrating. Their drunken celebration continues through Wednesday (the day light part, that is, half a day), Thursday, Friday, and Sabbath. After the three and one-half days end, the 144,000 are resurrected during the early morning hours (like Jesus) on Sunday, February 8. I like to imagine something like this happening: Even though it is still dark, a glorious light illumines each dead prophet as he or she comes to life. They walk about. Word breaks out and everyone goes out to see them. The wicked are totally undone – overcome with trembling and anxiety. Then, a loud voice from Heaven says to the 144,000, "Come up here."

If this scenario is possible, the timing becomes interesting because first fruits were always presented to the Lord on a Sunday in ancient times. Jesus Himself, the first fruits of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20), presented Himself to the Father on Sunday morning! (John 20:1,17) Since the 144,000 will be the first fruits of a numberless multitude who come out of the Great Tribulation, it is more than coincidental that they should be presented to God on Sunday. **"These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as *firstfruits* to God and the Lamb."** (Revelation 14:4, italics mine)

"Then they [the 144,000] **heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.'** **And they went up to heaven in a cloud** [of glory], **while their enemies looked on. At that very hour** [all over the world] **there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city** [a portion of the great whore] **collapsed. Seven thousand people**

[Lucifer's employees] **were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors** [the saints who are in hiding or awaiting death in dungeons and prisons] **were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe** [the sixth trumpet] **has passed; the third woe** [the seven bowls] **is coming soon.**" (Revelation 11:12-14)

Seventh Trumpet

We examined the details of the seventh trumpet (which follows the resurrection and ascension of the 144,000) in the previous chapter. There is no need to go over those details again. However, there is one interesting point that should be emphasized. During the seventh trumpet, the Ark of the Covenant will be displayed from Heaven. The whole world will see the box that contains one of the Two Witnesses! Even though this matter was also discussed at length in the previous chapter, it is important to understand that the people on Earth will be clearly divided. One group will have the plumb line of God's law written in their hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10-12) while the other group will be branded with an indelible tattoo showing that they preferred rebellion and defiance.

Finally, it is important to notice that the 144,000 will be glorified in the eyes of the wicked before they are taken to Heaven. God's *true* prophets will be taken to Heaven to watch the destruction of the *false* prophet, Lucifer. Their grueling 1,260 days are over and all that remains to be done on Earth is the execution of the seven bowls – God's merciless vengeance on the wicked. When Jesus appears at the Second Coming, 144,000 prophets will return with Him. At that time, a numberless multitude of people from every nation, people, language, and tribe – who heard and received salvation through the sacrifice and suffering of 144,000 ordinary people, will rise in the air to meet the 144,000, who were empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the law of God. Given the miserable failures of Israel (the single lampstand) and Christians (the seven lampstands), the harvest produced by God's Two Witnesses will be awesome – and the word awesome will prove to be a gross understatement.

“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.” (Matthew 19:29)

Notes

Notes

The Four Beasts of Revelation

“A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.”

- Revelation 12:1

We will examine two prophecies in this study. The first prophecy is a short story about Lucifer’s hatred for Jesus and the second prophecy is a longer story about Lucifer’s hatred for those who follow the teachings of Jesus. The first prophecy is found in Revelation 12:1-6 and the second prophecy immediately follows in Revelation 12:7-14:5. According to Rule One of Apocalyptic Prophecy, Revelation 12:1-14:5 consists of two different prophecies because chronological order is broken between verses 6 and 7. These two prophecies are intimately related, so we should examine both in this study. The two prophecies identify four beasts we need to consider. They are:

1. A lamb with seven horns and seven eyes (Revelation 5:6; 12:11; 13:8,11; 14:1,4)
2. A great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 12:3)
3. A leopard-like beast with seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 13:1,2)
4. A beast with two horns like the lamb, but speaks like the dragon (Revelation 13:11,17)

What Do the Four Beasts Represent?

1. The Lamb represents Jesus, the Lamb of God, who was slain for our sins. (John 1:29)
2. The great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns represents the fallen angel, Lucifer, who is also called Satan or the devil. (Revelation 12:9)
3. The leopard-like beast with seven heads and ten horns represents Babylon. (Revelation 14:8; 18:2-4) Babylon will form during the

first four trumpets and rule over the world as a church-state government.

4. The beast with two horns like *the* Lamb, but speaks like *the* dragon, represents Lucifer in human form. The devil and his angels will be released from the Abyss (the spirit realm) at the fifth trumpet. (Revelation 9:1-11) These evil beings will be given physical bodies so the inhabitants of Earth can see them, touch them, and freely talk with them.

Now that we have identified the four beasts, we need to investigate each of them.

The Lamb

Ever since the day that Adam and Eve sinned, a flawless lamb has been used to represent the sinless life of Jesus Christ. Although the Bible does not explicitly say the first burnt offering was a lamb, the Bible does say, “**The Lord God made garments of *skin* for Adam and his wife and clothed them.**” (Genesis 3:21, italics mine) Since the Bible does not elaborate further on the first sin offering, we can deduce two things. First, the use of skin for clothing indicates an animal died. Second, when we assemble everything God has said in the Bible about sin offerings, it is safe to assume that Adam sorrowfully killed the first lamb because “. . .**sin entered the world through one man and death through sin . . .**” (Romans 5:12)

When Jesus began His ministry on Earth, John the Baptist announced the mission of Jesus with a single sentence: “**The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’**” (John 1:29) I am sure that God chose a lamb to represent Jesus for several reasons. First, what are more adorable than baby lambs? They are loving, gentle, and easily bond to human beings. Second, in terms survival, sheep were valuable animals in Bible times, providing a source of food and clothing. They are hearty creatures and they reproduce often. Sheep often have multiple births, and since gestation is only five months, a herd of sheep can quickly double in size. Symbolically, Jesus is to eternal life what a lamb was to earthly life in Bible times. Last, sheep are social creatures. They are typically meek and gentle. Consider the words of Isaiah concerning Jesus: “**He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter [i.e., without resistance], and as a sheep before her shearers is silent**

[submissive], **so he did not open his mouth.**" (Isaiah 53:7, insertions mine) When we put these features together, a lamb symbolizes the life of Christ very well.

Notice John's description of Jesus in Revelation 5: **"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 [24] elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits [the seven angels] 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, insertions mine) Three fascinating aspects about Jesus are highlighted in this passage. First, John saw a "resurrected Lamb" standing in the center of God's throne. This indicates the scene occurs after the cross. Second, John saw seven horns on the Lamb. This means the Lamb has sovereign power (the number seven represents completion and horns represent authority). Third, the Lamb has seven eyes. These eyes represent the seven angels who stand (notice their posture) before the throne of God. (Revelation 1:4) These eyes are the seven angels who receive the seven trumpets. (Revelation 8:2) They are also called "seven spirits" (as in seven ghosts) because they are highly exalted beings who can appear and disappear on command. (Revelation 1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6) Notice Paul's words: **"Are not all angels ministering *spirits* sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"** (Hebrews 1:14, italics mine) The seven eyes of the Lamb are the seven angels of the seven churches, the seven angels who receive the seven trumpets, and the seven angels who pour out the seven bowls. (Revelation 1:20; 8:2; 15:6) These seven angels are servants of Jesus. They are sent from the throne and they report back to Him whatever they see. The beauty of understanding the seven eyes is that they serve an omnipotent Lamb who had been slain.

The Great Red Dragon

"Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars¹ out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth [to Jesus], so that he might devour

¹ Before Jesus created Earth, Lucifer caused one third of Heaven's angels (the stars) to join him in open rebellion against God. They were thrown out of Heaven. See Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:12-17.

her child the moment it was born.” (Revelation 12:3,4, italics and insertion mine)

The great red dragon symbolizes Lucifer. We know this is true because the Bible interprets the symbol with a relevant text: “**And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down – *that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.***” (Revelation 12:7-9, italics mine) The great red dragon is the devil. He is God’s adversary and man’s accuser. (Revelation 12:10)

Please consider two points that will prove useful later in this study:

1. The great red dragon and the Lamb are not governments or nations. I emphasize this distinction because some people insist that beasts in Bible prophecy always represent nations or governments. This assertion is not valid. The four beasts in Daniel 7 do represent four world empires because Daniel 7:17 says the four beasts are world empires, but Daniel 7:17 does not force the four beasts in Revelation to be four world empires. The Bible is not internally conflicted. If we allow the Bible to define symbols with texts that point to the symbol, we will find that the Lamb in Revelation 5 represents Jesus, and the great red dragon in Revelation 12 represents His adversary, the devil. These two beasts are caricatures of two supernatural beings – Jesus and Satan.
2. The great red dragon has seven heads and ten horns when he is introduced in Revelation 12:3. Later, we will learn that these seventeen features represent future extensions of Satan’s authority over mankind. In other words, when the story begins in Revelation 12 (at the birth of Jesus), the seven heads and ten horns on the great red dragon are not functioning, but they will “come alive” and function when their appointed time comes. This technique is not unusual in apocalyptic prophecy. When the fourth beast (Rome) rises out of the sea in Daniel 7:7, it has ten horns. History says that Rome began to function as a world empire in 168 B.C., but the ten horns did not begin functioning until six hundred years later. The beasts in Daniel and Revelation may have various parts when they are introduced in a story, but these parts may not have any function when the beast is first introduced.

The Devil's Name

The devil was an exalted angel before he was cast out of Heaven. Please consider three different translations of the same verse:

KJV

“How art thou fallen from heaven, *O Lucifer*, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!” (Isaiah 14:12, italics mine)

NIV

“How you have fallen from heaven, *O morning star*, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!” (Isaiah 14:12, italics mine)

NASB

“How you have fallen from heaven, *O star of the morning*, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!” (Isaiah 14:12, italics mine)

The translators of the KJV chose to translate the Hebrew word *heylel* with the Latin name “Lucifer,” whereas the translators of the NIV and NASB chose to translate *heylel* as “morning star” or “star of the morning.” The difference between the KJV and later translations stems from an ancient practice. Venus was a prominent morning star during the first century A.D. Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23-79) lived during the time of Christ and he wrote, “The star called Venus [has two names] ... when it rises in the morning it is given the name ‘Lucifer’ [which means ‘light bringer’]... but when it [Venus] shines at sunset it is called ‘Vesper.’” (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book 2, par. 36, insertions mine)

Early translators of the Bible, as far back as Jerome’s fifth century Latin Vulgate, preferred to use the Latin name “Lucifer” for *heylel* rather than translating the Hebrew word as “morning star.” This is how the name Lucifer found its way into the KJV because Lucifer’s given name is unknown. It is ironic that Venus shone brighter than any of the other stars each morning and in a spiritual sense, Lucifer allowed his surpassing glory to bring about his downfall. **“You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so**

I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.”
(Ezekiel 28:12-15)

A review of Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:12-18 reveals that Lucifer was once an anointed cherub in Heaven. Eventually, he became arrogant and self seeking. He became dissatisfied with God and His government. He coveted the worship and adoration that belonged to Michael, the archangel.¹ When Lucifer became jealous of the archangel, Michael, Lucifer did not know Michael was God living “in the feathers.” Let me explain what I mean. The Bible indicates that Jesus, the Creator, lived among the angels. This seems to be Jesus’ pattern. Jesus created the angels and lived among them (as Michael) – He also created man and lived among us. Michael lived among the angels, but Lucifer did not recognize that Michael was God. This mistake led to his undoing. Lucifer’s experience in Heaven is similar to what happened when Jesus lived as a man on Earth. The Jews did not know that Jesus was God living “in the flesh.” Our Creator (whether of angels or men) so closely identifies with His creation that no one can know that He is God unless there is a revelation of this truth! (This is the essential reason for the upcoming revelation of Jesus Christ!) Through malicious lies and deceptive innuendo, Lucifer persuaded one-third of Heaven’s angels to join him in rebellion against Michael, and this is how *Lucifer became the Antichrist*. The Godhead loved Lucifer and his followers. They did everything possible to change the feelings and attitudes of their subjects, but there was no repentance. When it became evident that extended mercy would bring no change and have no redeeming effect, God’s forbearance ended. God cast Lucifer and his angels out of Heaven. Jesus told His disciples, **“I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven.”** (Luke 10:18)

When Lucifer and his angels were cast out of Heaven, their anger and bitterness toward the Godhead turned into a roaring rage. To get even, they focused their wrath on the Jesus’ handiwork – the creation of Earth. The devil studied Adam and Eve for several years before he developed his subtle and deadly approach. The devil led Eve to disobey God and Eve led Adam into disobedience. Of course, the devil did not stop there. Cain, the firstborn of Adam and Eve, became a murderer. Astoundingly, within ten generations of creating Adam, human beings became so degenerate that God grieved that He had even made man! (Genesis 6)

¹ For further study on the topic of Michael/Jesus, please see Chapters 1-3 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*.

Consequently, God washed Earth with a flood of water, sparing just eight people – Noah and his family. The flood may have slowed the devil’s efforts to destroy mankind, but Peter reminds us that the devil is relentless. He goes around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour! (1 Peter 5:8, 9)

Satan Allowed to Live

Many people have asked the question: Why did God allow the devil to live after casting him out of Heaven? Why didn’t God exterminate the devil and his angels right away and protect the universe from Lucifer’s rebellion? These are great questions and the answers are just as important. Consider the following:

1. Before Lucifer rebelled, the universe, with all its created beings, did not understand the nature or impact of sin. If God had immediately annihilated Lucifer and one-third of the angels, He would have been unable to justify His actions. If God had destroyed Lucifer as soon as he had sinned, surviving angels would have concluded, “Whoa! God does not tolerate angels having views that are contrary to His.” If God had immediately annihilated His opposition before the knowledge of good and evil had a chance to mature, reasoning and highly intelligent angels would not have loved and trusted God. Angels (and mankind) should love God because He is fair, reasonable, generous, and forgiving, not because sudden death is a consequence for disagreement. If God had killed Lucifer and his followers before the outcome of their rebellion matured, the remaining angels would have concluded that God was a bully. They would have said, “He may claim to be a God of love, but His actions just proved that it is His way or death.”
2. God has infinite wisdom and perfect foreknowledge. His ways are perfect. He foreknew that sin needed a few thousand years to mature so that all the universe could understand its deadly and horrible consequences. By allowing the devil and his angels to live, God gave the universe two contrasting governments to study – one in Heaven (free of rebellion, full of joy, happiness, and peace) and one on Earth (full of sin, decadence, depravity, selfishness, and death). By permitting two governments to simultaneously exist, intelligent beings can see the difference for themselves. God does not have to defend Himself.
3. God gives the power of choice to each created being. This means that His subjects *do not* have to obey Him, love Him, or respond to

His goodness or generosity. Lucifer and his angels have proven that free will actually exists. They *chose* to rebel against God and His law. God gave Adam and Eve the power of choice and they also *chose* to disobey. For 6,000 years, sin has flourished on Earth. History has proven over and over again (with the rise and fall of numerous civilizations) that human beings *always* suffer in direct proportion to our departure from the laws of God. Sin may offer some temporary pleasure and excitement, but it always extracts a price that is far greater than its benefits. Sin takes us farther than we want to go and sin costs more than we want to pay. No matter how well Satan disguises sin, **“the wages of sin is death.”** (Romans 6:23) God foreknew that lawlessness would end in death and His Kingdom is established on laws that prevent sorrow and death. Created beings who rebel against God’s laws are not really arguing with God’s authority because created beings do not have omnipotence. The argument with God is over wisdom. Who knows best what the endless corridors of eternity require – the Creator or the created?

4. The Father certainly foreknew the consequences of allowing Satan and his angels to live, so He created a plan to save everyone who would live on Earth. He loved the people of the world so much that He gave us Jesus as our atonement for sin. For no other reason than love, Jesus was willing to become a man and die in our place so the penalty for our sin could be paid! The Godhead has suffered more and paid a higher price for the existence of sin than any human being will ever know! Incidentally, and this is an important point, God did not create a plan of salvation for Lucifer and his angels because they were confronted with the truth many times yet remained willful and defiant, and chose to reject God’s counsel. Without question, Lucifer and his angels committed the unpardonable sin. (Matthew 12:31,32)

When these four issues are synthesized, we can see why God did not immediately destroy Lucifer and his rebellious followers. The conflict between Christ and Lucifer over mankind has been ongoing for thousands of years. Today, Jesus and Lucifer are striving to win the affections of people. Look around. Good is being overcome with evil and this contest will reach a climax during the Great Tribulation.

A Demon with Many Titles

The devil is called by a variety of names in the Bible. Daniel calls him a stern-faced king. (Daniel 8:23) Ezekiel calls him the ruler of Tyre. (Ezekiel 28:2) Isaiah calls him the king of Babylon. (Isaiah 14:4) Paul

calls him the man of lawlessness. (2 Thessalonians 2:3) John calls him an enormous red dragon (Revelation 12:3), the beast that comes up from the Abyss (Revelation 11:7), a beast having two horns (Revelation 13:11), the false prophet (Revelation 16:13), and the angel king of the Abyss (Revelation 9:11).

God gave Lucifer various titles for several reasons. Here are two: First, the devil is invisible and different titles help us understand his vast capabilities. Second, God gives the devil various titles to undercut the devil's deceptions! For example, when the devil physically appears on Earth, he will gloriously masquerade as Almighty God. His deception will be so convincing that it could deceive the "very elect" if that were possible. (Mark 13:22) Notice how the title, "the man of lawlessness," describes the behavior of Lucifer after he appears. Lucifer will do as he pleases and no one can stop him. The laws of mankind will mean nothing to him. The devil will create and enforce many laws that will have no purpose but angst and destruction. God gave Bible writers all of Lucifer's titles and each one speaks volumes about Lucifer's character, power, and ways.

Babylon, the Leopard-like Beast

"And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a *leopard*, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The [great red] dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound *had been healed*. The *whole world was astonished and followed the beast.*" (Revelation 13:1-3, italics and insertion mine)

Ever since the book of Revelation was written, there has been a great deal of speculation about the identity of the leopard-like beast. This beast has numerous specifications and resolving each one takes more than time and effort. Valid results require a valid set of rules. If a person just wants to accept any interpretation that seems reasonable, there are many interpretations from which to choose. However, there is only one solution to the problem of identifying this beast, and to get to the truth, we need to address and correctly resolve each specification.

To make this presentation as simple as possible, I have decided to identify the leopard-like beast first so you can see how each specification contributes to the conclusion as we proceed. The leopard-

like beast will be a **religious authority, a crisis government** that religious and political leaders of the world will create shortly after the Great Tribulation begins. The leaders will create this beast of a government to mediate between God and man.

When the censer in Revelation 8:5 is cast down and the first four trumpets fall on the world in rapid succession, it is a gross understatement to say that the survivors will be overwhelmed and terrified. The destruction of thousands of cities and 1.75 billion people is unimaginable – incomprehensible. As the survivors survey the damage, almost everyone will concede that God is angry with this world because mankind is far more degenerate and decadent than we should be. We live on a degenerate and decadent planet, but most people do not know that God's wrath has been overdue since 1994 when the Jubilee Calendar ended. We have been living on borrowed time. God's wrath is stirred when He sees children abused, women raped, people robbed, elderly cheated out of their savings, addicts agonizing for more drugs, endless violence, and bloodshed.

The chapter on the seven trumpets showed that God has many objectives for His judgments. God wants everyone to know about Jesus and His salvation. God will judge the living and terminate the sin problem. God will wipe the universe clean and start over. His plans are written in the books of Daniel and Revelation. Unfortunately, few people really want to understand the ways of God. The mysteries of apocalyptic prophecy are often ignored because they take too much work and many people think "they do not pertain to salvation." Nevertheless, once the world sees the awesome destruction caused by God's wrath (the first four trumpets), everyone on Earth will be traumatized. What does it say about man's degeneracy when a God of love has to destroy a third of the planet and twenty-five percent of its inhabitants to get the undivided attention of the survivors?

God's wrath will bring the religious and the political leaders of the world together and for the first time since the flood in Noah's day, this gathering will be a humble meeting. God's judgments will embarrass them because these events will force the leaders of the world to recognize the higher power and reality of a living God who holds everyone accountable for his actions. Together, the leaders of the world will work out a solution to appease God's anger. Their solution will be to create the leopard-like beast. The leopard-like beast will be a religious authority, designed to carry out a global mandate: Appease God so that His wrath will cease. While the idea of appeasing God's

wrath may sound appropriate, the process will be impossible from the start because our world is so religiously diverse. Nevertheless, religious leaders will conclude that God's anger can be stopped if decadence and corruption can be eliminated. The leopard-like beast will have the authority to determine for each nation the best process for outlawing decadence and corruption, and the political leaders of the world will voluntarily submit to the demands of the beast. At first, almost everyone will cooperate with the leopard-like beast because no one wants to experience more of God's wrath, but this is only the beginning of the story and a lot of tribulation. . . .

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to visit an automobile manufacturing plant in Dayton, Ohio. It was an unforgettable experience. I was like a kid in a candy store. As I walked through the huge building that covered about thirty acres, I saw all kinds of interesting parts and pieces that would eventually come together to make up an automobile. I was overwhelmed, but the one thing that most astonished me was the amount of coordination and communication that goes into the construction of each vehicle. Items of all kinds – tires, engines, seats, horns, carpets, tail pipes, and headlights – were moving around on tracks and as each moving chassis reached another assembly station, the necessary parts for that vehicle also arrived at that station. It was so interesting how the correct items arrived just in time to put that item on the chassis! I have shared this experience with you because I want you to consider a parallel. At the end of the tour, our tour guide told us that enough parts were in the building at any given time to build approximately 100 vehicles, even though there was only *one* completed vehicle in the building at any given time. Similarly, all of the parts necessary to create the leopard-like beast exist on Earth today, but the beast itself has not been assembled. The appointed time for assembly does not arrive until after the fourth trumpet.

Mistaken Identity

Many people mistakenly assume the fourth beast in Daniel 7 and leopard-like beast in Revelation 13 are the same beast. This understanding is incorrect for five reasons:

1. *The leopard-like beast does not exist prior to 1798.* When the leopard-like beast rises from the sea, John saw that one head on the leopard-like beast “**seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed.**” (Revelation 13:3) For reasons

that will be presented later, this head represents the Roman Catholic Church. History records that the Catholic Church lost its authority over the kings of Europe during the French Revolution (1789-1799). The pope was exiled to France in 1798 and the authority of the church was badly wounded. Now notice that when the leopard-like beast rises from the sea, the deadly wound *is healed*. This specification forces the appearing of the leopard-like beast *after* 1798 because the fatal wound cannot be healed before the deadly wound is inflicted!

2. Earlier in this study we learned that various parts of a beast's anatomy may or may not be functional when a beast is introduced. This feature exists with both the ten horns on the fourth beast in Daniel 7 and the seven heads and ten horns on the great red dragon in Revelation 12. Even though Daniel saw ten horns on the fourth beast in Daniel 7 when it rose out of the sea, history verifies that the ten horns did not function in a prophetic sense until 600 years later. The leopard-like beast has a similar feature. John describes the leopard-like beast as having seven heads when it rises to power and **“one of its seven heads seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed.”** (Revelation 13:3)

Some people read Revelation 13:3 and conclude that the leopard-like beast must have existed prior to 1798 because one of the heads on the beast was wounded in 1798, but this is not the case. Read the specifications carefully! When the leopard-like beast rises from the sea, it comes up from the sea with a head that “seems to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed.” Did you notice the past perfect tense? The past perfect tense means action completed in the past. For example, suppose I saw a new automobile roll off the assembly line and I said to you, “The car had a bad tire, but the tire had been repaired by the time it rolled off the assembly line.” Does my statement require the auto to be complete and functioning before the bad tire was discovered or does my statement mean the bad tire was discovered and repaired before the auto rolled off the assembly line? The latter meaning is the intent of my statement.

The papacy existed before 1798, but *the leopard-like beast is not the papacy*. *The papacy is only one part of the leopard-like beast*. The leopard-like beast has seven heads – seven religious systems, not one! One head is described with precise language which eliminates any wiggle room on its identity. Daniel 7 indicates that the little

horn power was empowered for 1,260 years (A.D. 538-1798). Daniel 7:11 states that the little horn power would recover from its wound, and again speak boastfully after 1798. History confirms this prediction and recent history affirms the recovery of the papacy. Today, the Roman Catholic Church is again a respected world power. The church has diplomatic relations with 170 nations! God used precise language in Revelation 13 for two reasons. First, God wants everyone to know that the wounded/healed head represents the Roman Catholic Church. If we can identify that one head is a religious system, then the remaining six heads must be religious systems, as well. Second, God wants everyone to know that the rise of the leopard-like beast has to occur after 1798, because the language specifically states that the wounded head is *healed* when the beast rises from the sea.

3. Notice that the leopard-like beast has body parts that belong to a lion, a bear, and a leopard, and it just so happens that the first three beasts in Daniel 7 are a lion, a bear, and a leopard. Furthermore, the fourth beast in Daniel 7 has ten horns when it rises from the sea and so does the leopard-like beast! Many people have noticed these similarities and then make a big mistake. They leap to the conclusion that the fourth beast in Daniel 7 and the leopard-like beast in Revelation 13 are the *same* beast even though the “head count” is different – one in Daniel and seven in Revelation. This leap in logic is not supported by the facts or the specifications. The fourth beast in Daniel 7 and the leopard-like beast in Revelation 13 are very different beasts, and even more importantly, they live at different times. Even though they share certain similarities, they are separate and distinct entities.

Consider the similarities between the two beasts: Both beasts persecute the saints of God for a specific amount of time. The fourth beast in Daniel 7 persecuted the saints for 1,260 years. (Daniel 7:25) The leopard-like beast will persecute God’s people for forty-two months during the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 13:5) These two time periods cannot be the same time period. If they are, then the leopard-like beast would have to rise to power along with the fourth beast in 168 B.C. Of course, this is not possible because John documented that when he saw the leopard-like beast rising out of the sea, the deadly wound had been healed! (Revelation 13:3)

4. The Bible predicts, “**All inhabitants of the Earth will worship the [leopard-like] beast. . .**” (Revelation 13:8, insertion mine)

There has never been a historical time when “*all* inhabitants of the Earth” worshiped the fourth beast of Daniel 7 and there never will be a future time. The fourth beast in Daniel 7 was given power to rule over Europe for 1,260 years. The leopard-like beast will be given power to rule over the *whole world* for a literal period of forty-two months. If the forty-two months in Revelation 13:5 and the time, times and half a time in Daniel 7:25 represent the same time period, then an insurmountable problem is created. It would mean that both beasts are powerless during the Great Tribulation because their empowerment is limited to the Dark Ages (A.D. 538-1798).

5. Finally, the fourth beast in Daniel 7 and the leopard-like beast in Revelation 13 have ten horns, but they are not the *same* ten horns. The ten horns on the fourth beast in Daniel 7 represent ten tribal nations that divided and conquered Rome by A.D. 476. The ten horns on the leopard-like beast represent ten kings who will be alive at the Second Coming! (Revelation 13:1; 17:12-14; Daniel 2:42)

Consider the math: The Bible predicted that three of the original ten horns on the fourth beast in Daniel 7 would be uprooted and destroyed by A.D. 538.¹ History affirms the fulfillment of this prediction. Then, the little horn (the papacy) became the eighth horn and it ruled over the remaining seven horns until it received a deadly wound in 1798. Therefore, the fourth beast in Daniel 7 ended up having eight horns for 1,260 years.

Notice the difference. When the leopard-like beast rises to power during the Great Tribulation, it will have seven heads and ten horns – not eight horns! The ten horns on the leopard-like beast represent ten kings who will be alive at the Second Coming! The angel told John, **“The ten horns you saw [on the leopard-like beast] are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the [great red dragon] beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the [great red dragon] beast [the devil]. They will make war against the Lamb [at the Second Coming – Revelation 16:14-16], but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”** (Revelation 17:12-14)

¹ For further discussion on the fall of the Roman Empire and the identity of the ten horns on the fourth beast in Daniel 7, please see Chapter 3 in my book, *Daniel: Unlocked for the Final Generation*.

Bottom Line: When we synthesize these five issues, it is impossible for the fourth beast in Daniel 7 and the leopard-like beast in Revelation 13 to be the same beast. There may be similarities between them, but they are two different creatures living in two different ages. They share several parallels, which helps us understand the future more clearly because the behavior of the leopard-like beast will mirror the behavior of the fourth beast in Daniel 7. For example, consider these parallels between the two beasts: both beasts persecute God's saints; both beasts are empowered for a specific amount of time; both beasts will be destroyed with fire at the Second Coming; both beasts are blasphemous; and both beasts emphasize the role of the papacy (that is, the papacy derives its ruling power from each beast). Papal power will soon flourish during the forty-two months granted to the leopard-like beast just like it flourished during the 1,260 years given to the fourth beast.

Parallel Babylons – Ancient and Modern

The leopard-like beast is called Babylon six times in the book of Revelation because there are many parallels between the ancient empire of Babylon and the modern empire of Babylon. Consider these parallels: Ancient Babylon was a world empire¹ and modern Babylon will be a world empire. Ancient Babylon worshiped false gods and modern Babylon will worship false gods. The prophets and gods of the ancient Babylonians were shown to be grossly inferior to the true prophets of God and the same thing will happen in modern Babylon. Ancient Babylon captured and persecuted God's people. Modern Babylon will capture and persecute God's people. The king of ancient Babylon set up an image which everyone was required to worship. Anyone refusing to worship the image was to be killed. The king of modern Babylon will do the same thing. The king of ancient Babylon did not recognize the sovereign authority of the Most High God. The king of modern Babylon will do the same. Ancient Babylon was defiant

¹ Even though ancient Babylon was a great empire (605-538 B.C.), one can factually argue that ancient Babylon (and Medo-Persia, Grecia, and Rome) did not rule over the *whole* world. However, ancient Babylon did rule over that part of the world where God's people lived and using this point of reference, one can say that Babylon was a world empire. Starting with ancient Babylon, each succeeding empire became geographically larger and larger until finally, during the time period of the feet, the whole world is represented as "a divided kingdom" made up of many nations that are both strong and weak. (Daniel 2:41) At the end, ten kings will rule the whole world during the final days of Earth's history. Compare Daniel 2:42 with Revelation 17:12-14.

and insulting to God and modern Babylon will be the same. Modern Babylon will experience the same fate as ancient Babylon.

The king of modern Babylon (Lucifer) will prove to be more blasphemous than the king of ancient Babylon. Remember the ego and vanity of King Nebuchadnezzar. “[H]e [King Nebuchadnezzar] said, **‘Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?’** The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, **‘This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you.’**” (Daniel 4:30,31, insertion and italics mine) After being warned about his exceeding arrogance and pride (Daniel 4:4-27), Nebuchadnezzar continued to ignore the warning which the Most High God had given him. The king vainly reasoned that Babylon was the product of his genius and his great power. One day, after speaking boastful words (Daniel 4:29,30), God instantly turned Nebuchadnezzar into a raving madman. The king was driven away from his residence in the city to live among the wild beasts of the field for seven years. (Daniel 4:31-33) At the end of his sentence, God not only restored the king’s mind, but He also restored the king to his throne. (Daniel 4:34,35) Nebuchadnezzar confessed to his empire that indeed, there is a Sovereign God who rules over the kingdoms of man and gives them to anyone He wishes. (Daniel 4:36,37) It is ironic that Nebuchadnezzar could not bring himself to tell his empire that the Sovereign God of the universe, who restored his good fortune, was the God of the Jews. God rarely gets the credit He deserves. Unfortunately, Nebuchadnezzar’s offspring did not learn from his experience or testimony. A few years after Nebuchadnezzar died, Belshazzar became king, and after insulting the God of Heaven one too many times, God destroyed him. (Daniel 5) The fate of Belshazzar, king of ancient Babylon, and Lucifer, king of modern Babylon, will be the same.

Babylon – A Hand Puppet of the Devil

The great red dragon (the devil) has an anatomy that is similar to the leopard-like beast (Babylon). There is a good reason for this. When the time comes, the great red dragon will enter the leopard-like beast similar to the way a hand is inserted into a latex glove. The Bible says **“The dragon gave the [leopard-like] beast his power and his throne and great authority.”** (Revelation 13:2, insertion mine) Babylon will become a hand puppet of the devil. Remember, Babylon’s mandate will be simple: Appease God so that His judgments will cease. People will think the solution will be to eliminate decadent and

degenerate behavior. Therefore, Babylon will create many “sin-less” laws which civil authorities will enforce. Notice this profound point: If a person obeys the laws of Babylon, he actually worships the leopard-like beast because the biblical meaning of the word “worship” is submission. Today, we usually interpret the word “worship” to mean a religious celebration, a church service, or a religious gathering, but the Greek word for “worship” is *proskuneo* which means “to surrender obedience, to prostrate oneself, or to kiss with submission.” (Remember Judas’ kiss. Matthew 26:49) When Abel worshiped God, he killed the sacrificial lamb as God demanded. On the other hand, Cain did not worship God, but instead presumed to worship God by putting fruit on the altar. Obeying the laws of Babylon means worshipping the devil. The Bible cannot make it any clearer: **“Men worshiped [obeyed] the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped [obeyed] the [leopard-like] beast and asked, ‘Who is like the [leopard-like] beast? Who can make war [resist his authority and argue] against him [without being punished]?’”** (Revelation 13:4, insertions mine)

Babylon will be a “monster-sized” church-state empowered by the devil. Remember, the devil’s focus is a specific group of people – the remnant of the woman. He tried to kill Jesus at birth and failed. He tried to keep his seat in God’s government, but Jesus cast him out on Resurrection Sunday. He chased the woman for 1,260 years and failed to destroy her in the wilderness. Therefore, this ancient scholar of Scripture knows full well this will be his last chance, and he is determined to totally destroy God’s people. **“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring – those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”** (Revelation 12:17) The devil has a plan and Babylon will be the perfect tool for executing it. The devil will manipulate Babylon’s leaders. He will dictate laws through them, and the governments of the world will enforce these laws – thinking that they are appeasing God. Ultimately, Lucifer will persecute billions of people through Babylon’s blind leaders. (Luke 6:39)

Given the global diversity of mankind today, it seems foolish to predict that a time is coming when the whole world will *voluntarily* submit to one religious authority. A global church-state is unthinkable and impossible right now, but the Bible predicts it will surely occur. The Bible says, **“The whole world was astonished [by the first four trumpets and recognizing their need to appease the wrath of Almighty God, the political leaders of the world laid aside their objections] and followed the [demands of the leopard-like] beast.”** (Revelation 13:3,

italics and insertions mine)

The leopard-like beast will be man's solution to God's wrath. Babylon's logic will be simple: Appease God by outlawing decadent behavior. Religious leaders will trample on the inalienable rights of human beings and the political structures of all nations. If anyone speaks against Babylon, he will be accused of blasphemy and punished accordingly. (This is why we need to spread the word now – before freedom of speech is lost.) To make matters worse, the political leaders of the world will yield to Babylon's authority and what choice will they have? If they refuse to comply with Babylon's demands, more wrath from God will surely fall! In short, the nations of Earth will be caught in a no-win situation, and the political leaders of Earth will allow Babylon to rule over them. A horrible world order will be established without firing a single bullet. The devil will rejoice! He will energize false religion and paralyze politicians with fear so that he can persecute the saints. The first four trumpets will remove the political leaders of the world from their exalted posts of duty and the religious leaders of the world will take their place for 890 days. During this time frame, God intends to confront the seven false religions of Earth head on and expose them for what they are. You may recall that God did the same thing with the religious leaders in ancient Babylon. (See Daniel 2.)

The Crowns Are Moved

We have already noticed that the leopard-like beast has seven heads and ten horns just like the great red dragon. However, the crowns are moved from the seven **heads** on the great red dragon in Revelation 12:3 to the ten **horns** of the leopard-like beast in Revelation 13:1. This relocation of the crowns indicates a shift in persecuting authority.

The Greek language has two words that mean "crown." The first word is *diadema* and the second is *stephanos*. A *diadema* is a crown of authority (a king's crown), whereas a *stephanos* is a winner's crown (such as the Miss America Pageant's crown). The book of Revelation uses and identifies both types of crowns. The woman in Revelation 12:1 wears a winner's crown (a *stephanos*) that has twelve stars in it, whereas both beasts wear a *diadema* – a crown of authority.

The dragon chases the woman into the wilderness for 1,260 years as Revelation 12 begins. The crowns' placement on the red dragon is important because the *diadema* are on the heads of this beast. In other words, persecution comes from the religious authorities. Religious authorities persecuted Jesus (and His followers) and religious authorities

also persecuted Christians during the Dark Ages. However, when Babylon rises from the sea, the *diadema* are located on the ten horns. This means the devil will use civil authorities to persecute God's people. How clever! The devil will speak through Babylon's clergy. They will create many "sin-less" laws designed to appease God. Babylon will then dictate these laws to the nations of Earth and civil authorities in each nation (e.g., national police, security services, armies, etc.) will enforce them. Civil authorities will end up doing the devil's dirty work! Very clever.

While the mechanics of demonic possession are complex, the result is rather easy to understand. A demon possessed person has a deranged mind. A demon possessed person cannot control his emotions, thoughts, or impulses, at times. A demon possessed person has moments of no tolerance or compassion, and a demon possessed government is no different. Demon possessed leaders like Herod are not concerned about the welfare of their subjects. They are obsessed with exercising and maintaining absolute power and control. They think nothing of imposing suffering and torture on their subjects to accomplish their goals.

After Babylon forms, it will quickly become a demon possessed government. Babylon will create laws that will become increasingly oppressive as time passes. Penalties for "civil disobedience" will escalate accordingly. This will be a telltale sign that the devil has gained control of Babylon, for there is nothing that brings Lucifer greater joy than to have human beings inflict horrible suffering upon one another. The devil rejoices every time an injustice is done. He rejoices every time a violent act is committed. The devil rejoices to see innocent victims suffer and die. Make no mistake, he also rejoices when the real perpetrators of crime languish in prison or receive due justice. The devil does not care about anyone – the perpetrator or the victim of crime. The dragon wants human beings to suffer because he wants Christ to suffer. *Lucifer knows that nothing produces more grief in the heart of Jesus than human suffering.*

Who Are the Seven Heads?

"And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads . . . and on each head [was written] a blasphemous name." (Revelation 13:1, insertion mine) The seven heads are religious in nature, because each head has a "blasphemous" name written on it. The presence of a blasphemous name means that each head is defiantly opposed to God's will (which is blasphemy). Of course,

the seven heads are currently unaware of their blasphemy because each religious system *believes* that it is in perfect conformity with God's will and truth. During the Great Tribulation, the Two Witnesses will empower the 144,000 to speak for God, and once the gospel of Jesus is presented, man's ignorance, arrogance, and blasphemy will be revealed. As we investigate the identity of the seven heads, it is important to keep in mind there are seven of the *same* thing. Whatever one head represents, the other six must also represent. So, who are the seven heads? Look at these three specifications:

- Specification 1** Each head has a blasphemous name written on it (Revelation 13:1)
- Specification 2** One head seemed to have received a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed (Revelation 13:3)
- Specification 3** The seven heads are seven hills (or mountains) on which the woman sits. (Revelation 17:9)

Comments:

The only religious system on Earth that can meet the wounded/healed head specification is the Roman Catholic Church. Daniel 7 indicates that the power of the little horn power (the papacy) would be terminated at the end of 1,260 years (1798). Daniel 7:11 reveals that the little horn would once again speak boastfully against the Most High God after "the court was seated and the books were opened." In Daniel 8, we learned that the court was seated and the books were opened in 1844. Following the logic of these three texts, we can understand that the wounded/healed head will speak boastfully against God during the Great Tribulation because the deadly wound will be healed early in the Great Tribulation.

Even though the papacy is only one of the seven heads on the leopard-like beast, it will prove to be the leader of the remaining six heads until the fifth trumpet occurs. Led by the papacy and speaking in unison for all religious systems, the seven heads on the leopard-like beast will speak boastfully against Jesus Christ and His authority. "**The [leopard-like] beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months.**" (Revelation 13:5, insertion mine)

To facilitate this study on the seven heads, we will proceed under the

assumption that the wounded/healed head is the Roman Catholic Church and that the other six heads are also religious systems. Once you have reviewed all of the specifications for the seven heads, I believe you will find that this conclusion leaves no wiggle room.

The Seven Hills

A church may grow in membership until the physical plant is inadequate for worship services. When this happens, a search committee is usually created and empowered to find a piece of property where a larger facility can be built. Today, it is the building that makes church property holy ground. In ancient times, it was the other way around. Holy ground made the building or temple holy. If holy ground was not close, the ancients worshiped on mountain tops – where it was believed that deity lived or descended. Notice this sampling of Bible texts (there are more than sixty references on this topic in the Bible, but these few should suffice):

Just before he died, Moses prophesied the Lord would select a special place for His temple after Israel entered the promised land. Moses said: “[After you enter the land which the Lord has given you,] **Then to *the place* the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name – *there* you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the Lord.**” (Deuteronomy 12:11, italics and insertion mine)

About 470 years after Moses died, the Lord chose a specific place for His temple: “**Then the angel of the Lord ordered [the prophet] Gad to tell David to go up and *build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.***” (1 Chronicles 21:18, italics and insertion mine)

About ten years later, “**Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on *Mount Moriah*, where the Lord had appeared to his father David. *It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David.***” (2 Chronicles 3:1, italics mine) Consider three points. First, God deliberately placed His temple on the threshing floor of Araunah. (This is the spot where God directed Abraham to offer Isaac. Genesis 22:2) Second, God deliberately chose to put His temple on a mountain top (Mount Moriah). Third, after God abandoned Israel and destroyed His temple and the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, He eventually put a seal on Mount Moriah to keep Israel from rebuilding the temple. This seal is a mosque called

the Dome of the Rock.

Before Solomon built the temple, Israel had been worshipping false gods on various mountain tops (also called “high places”). Even King Solomon offered sacrifices and incense at these places: **“The people, however, were still sacrificing at the *high places*, because a temple had not yet been built for the Name of the Lord.**

Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father David, *except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.*” (1 Kings 3:2,3, italics mine) After Solomon died, the apostasy of Israel matured into open rebellion against God. Notice what the Lord says of His rebellious people: **“Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord . . . They also set up for themselves *high places*, sacred stones and Asherah poles on every *high hill* and under every spreading tree. There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the *detestable practices* of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites.”** (1 Kings 14:22-24, italics mine)

These references explain how seven heads can be called seven hills or seven mountains. The Greek word *oros* means “hills” or “mountains.” Some translators translate *oros* to mean “hills” and others use the same word to mean “mountains.” In ancient times, any mountain or “high hill” was regarded as a holy place. The lofty pinnacle of any mountain was regarded as a dwelling place for deity. The seven heads are called seven mountains because each religious system worships on a different mountain top. *Each religious system worships a different God.* You may recall from our study on the seven trumpets, that Babylon will use the enabling lie that everyone worships the same God, even though He is called by different names. The Bible says otherwise. There is one true God and many false gods. The seven religious systems of the world do not “look up” to the same God – they worship seven different false gods on seven different mountains! This truth will become clear once the 144,000 begin their work.

Consider the devil’s sophistry for a moment: Jesus descended to *Mount Sinai* to give the law to Moses. (Exodus 19:18) The devil saw the awesome power of Christ displayed that day and being the devil he is, he decided to counterfeit the idea. The devil led ignorant pagans to believe that various gods descend upon the mountain tops. Therefore, to meet and worship their gods, they dutifully climbed rugged mountains. (I’m sure the devil was amused at making worship such a chore.) Poor ignorant people undertook a horrible hike to appease gods

of wood and stone with sacrifices (even human sacrifices) so they would be protected from harm.

False religion is confined to darkness. It is based on fear and superstition, and the devil preys on man's ignorance of God to distort man's beliefs about God. When seen in reverse, apostasy is easy to understand, but it is hard to detect in the present because error never stops inching into all religions. Therefore, religion constantly mutates. For example, Israel went from the Mount Sinai experience to complete apostasy on the mountain tops around Jerusalem. The Lord said, **"The people of Judah have done evil in my eyes, declares the Lord. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears my Name and have defiled it. They have built *the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire – something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind.*"** (Jeremiah 7:30,31, italics mine)

Take a moment and consider God's fiery manifestations on the mountains of Sinai, Carmel, and Moriah. When Jesus descended on Mount Sinai to speak the Ten Commandments, the whole mountain was set on fire! (Exodus 19:18) When Elijah prayed on Mount Carmel, fire came down and consumed the altar! (1 Kings 18:38) Fire came down from Heaven and consumed Solomon's offerings when the temple on Mount Moriah was dedicated. (2 Chronicles 7:1) Given these supernatural examples, it is easy to see why false religions came to believe in "holy mountains" as the dwelling place of gods. The symbolism in Revelation 17:9 is direct and forceful. The seven heads are seven mountains. The seven heads are seven religious systems, each having its own mountain and its own god. Moreover, when people look at a mountain, they always look up to see its peak. Similarly, a religious system is an organization where people look up to their leaders for information about God. David wrote, **"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills [mountains], from whence cometh my help [from my God]."** (Psalm 121:1, KJV, insertions mine) The true God in Heaven no longer dwells on Mount Moriah. He lives in Heaven, on Mount Zion! (Revelation 14:1)

One last point. Citizens of the United States should easily grasp the concept of describing seven religious systems as seven hills because the principal building in Washington D.C. is called *Capitol Hill*. United States citizens look up to Capitol Hill as the source of their laws – just like the Jews looked up to Mount Sinai as the source for theirs.

Specification 4 The seven heads are also seven kings.

(Revelation 17:10)

A king has subjects and a religious system has subjects. Those who submit to the tenants of a particular religion become subjects to its teachings, laws, and regulations. This explains how seven mountains and seven heads on the beast can also be seven kings. The seven religious systems of the world have authority over their subjects. If you do not believe this statement is true, consider this: No member can defy church doctrine without being punished for it. When a person is no longer willing to submit to the tenants of his religion, he will be eliminated from that religious body for heresy. In some countries, elimination means death. In other countries, it means excommunication or expulsion. All seven religious systems are kings. They condemn those who defy their authority and teachings.

Specification 5 “They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.” (Revelation 17:10)

This specification is very important because the timing of this statement forces the identity of the seven heads to be seven religious systems. Using a past perfect tense, the angel said, “Five [heads] have fallen” to indicate action completed in the past. To determine when the five heads fell, we have to determine the setting for this conversation.

John received this vision while he was on the isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:9,10). Most scholars agree that John was on Patmos between A.D. 95-98. If we put the angel’s statement within the timely context of this conversation, his words will perfectly align with everything John wrote thus far about the seven heads. In other words, five of the seven heads *had fallen* prior to A.D. 95.

According to Webster’s Dictionary, the word “fallen” is not limited to “destroyed or collapsed.” In a larger sense, “fallen” can mean “brought down” or “demonstrated to be false or corrupt.” If I said, “Jimmy Bakker, former president of the PTL Club, is a *fallen* evangelist,” anyone remembering the history of Jimmy Bakker would understand this use of the word “fallen.” Bakker was a popular TV evangelist who was caught up in a sex and money scandal. He was publicly humiliated and disgraced when his corruption leaked out to the public. (Bakker was granted parole from prison in July 1994, after serving almost five years of his original forty-five year sentence.) Webster states that the word “fallen” can mean “proven false.” In fact, when the 144,000 gives

the second angel's message, Babylon will not be weak, destroyed, or collapsed. The leopard-like beast will be extremely powerful, but it will be corrupt and blasphemous. **“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”** (Revelation 14:8)

If we put the angel's words *within the context of A.D. 95*, a simple explanation unfolds. When God became flesh and dwelt among men, five religious systems were exposed as false. Think about this: In a world of diverse, but religious equals, who else but God can **declare** a religious system false? Five of the seven heads were proven false before A.D. 95, and they are the following:

A. Heathenism is a religious system that operates in darkness. It does not worship the true God of Heaven. It does not know or have the Word of God. This religious system is huge and diverse, and it is often cruel and hopeless. Nevertheless, man's ignorance does not lessen God's love for human beings living in darkness. Because mankind is inherently rebellious and religious, this religious system creates gods to address its fears, fantasies, and superstitions. The birth and ministry of Jesus proves this religious system is false. **“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way [to eternal life] and the truth [I am telling you the truth about God] and the life [I am showing you how God wants you to live]. No one comes to the Father except through me [through my atoning sacrifice].’”** (John 14:6, insertions mine)

Note: It is important to remember that God deals with people corporately and individually. Religious systems are one thing and the members within that system are another. Even though all seven religious systems are false and blasphemous, there are millions of honest-hearted individuals within the seven religious systems of the world. Millions of dead heathen – those who lived down through the ages – will be given eternal life on resurrection morning because they stood for everything they knew to be right and true, and they submitted to the impressions of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 2:14) These people will be beneficiaries of Christ's atoning sacrifice even though they never had the opportunity to hear about Jesus. (Zechariah 13:6) To demonstrate that their salvation is warranted, millions of heathen will hear the 144,000 during the Great Tribulation and they will embrace the gospel and be saved. The response of the living proves that an honest-hearted person – regardless of his religious background – can be trusted with eternal

life. Jesus has paid the price for every honest-hearted sinner. He will grant eternal life to billions of dead Heathens, Atheists, Eastern Mystics, Catholics, Protestants, Moslems, and Jews who lived in harmony with God's law (as far as they understood it) and according to the Spirit (as far as they understood Him). God is unbelievably generous! Amen!

- B. Atheism** is a religious system that denies the existence of God. This belief system was proven false the day Jesus was born. King David wrote, **“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They [the fools] are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.”** (Psalm 14:1,2, insertion mine) Jesus said He came from God, so who should we believe? **“Jesus said to them [the Jews], ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.’”** (John 8:42, insertion mine)
- C. Judaism** is a religious system that denies that Jesus is God. Judaism believes that salvation comes through obedience. Jesus proved this religious system false when He said, **“I tell you the truth, he who believes [in me] has everlasting life.”** (John 6:47, insertion mine)
- D. Eastern Mysticism** is a religious system that worships many false gods. Eastern Mysticism believes that self can save self by overcoming cycles of life and death. Eastern Mysticism does not know or worship Jesus. Jesus proved this religious system false in the same way He rebuked the Jews for putting traditions above the Word of God saying, **“Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”** (Mark 7:13)
- E. Islam**¹ is a religious system that rejects the divinity of Jesus. Islam does not accept the premise that mankind needs a sinless Savior. Jesus proved this religious system false when He said, **“For God so**

¹ Although Islam today is often associated with the sixth century A.D. influence of Mohammed, the title, Islam, as used here, includes the ancient Arabic faith from which Mohammedism grew. Even though many Christians believe Mohammed was the founder of Islam, it must be emphasized that Mohammed did not invent the Islamic faith. Rather, he united, organized, clarified, and expanded the beliefs of nomadic Arabians. Moslems believe in

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. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:16-18)

The Last Two Heads

The angel told John, **"Five heads have fallen, one head is [new], and one is yet to come, but when he does come, he must remain for a little while."** (Revelation 17:10, insertion mine) The new head that appeared in John's day was Christianity. What was called Christianity during the first few centuries is called Catholicism today. The Greek word *katholikos* means "universal" or "everywhere." In other words, as Rome's version of Christianity spread throughout Europe and Eurasia, the church became known as the Catholic (the universal Christian) Church. John was a charter member of the early church, the religious system which Jesus Himself established during His ministry on Earth (A.D. 27-30).

The verse in Revelation 17:10 is very critical because it involves timing. The angel said (using the past perfect tense): "Five [heads] have fallen" and one head is [new]. If the beginning of Christianity has a birthdate, it would have to be Pentecost, A.D. 30. (Acts 2) By A.D. 95, Christianity had spread through much of the Roman Empire, but this was not the end of new religious systems on Earth. The angel said that another head was yet to come and when it does come, it would remain for a little while. The seventh head is Protestantism. Bible prophecy allows us to trace the history of Christianity and Protestantism. In terms of apostasy, the history of Christianity is no different than the history of Israel.

After giving Jews, Catholics, and Protestants an opportunity to represent His interests on Earth, God has proven that all religious systems have become blasphemous over time because the carnal nature within man is the same throughout the world. This also explains why the

forced conversions, so Islam spread through the Middle East as a result of the Ottoman conquests. Mohammed is considered by Moslems to be the **last**, and therefore the greatest of God's messengers. Moslems trace the origin of their faith back to Abraham, Ishmael, and his twelve sons. Moslems regard Abraham as the father of their faith, not Mohammed. (See Genesis 21:13 and Genesis 25:16.)

144,000 will not come from a single religious body. Jesus will select them from all religious systems because the gospel commission will be completed by honest-hearted individuals instead of one arrogant religious system.

After the powers of the papacy were broken in 1798, the Protestant Reformation blossomed for a few years in Europe and the United States, and then it fragmented into many pieces. God raised up the United States of America to help the woman in Revelation 12, but Protestantism has quickly turned away from God and fallen into apostasy during the past 100 years. Speaking of Protestantism (the seventh head), the angel said, “. . . **but when he [the seventh head] does come, he must remain for a little while.**” (Revelation 17:10, insertion mine) This is very true. In term of religious systems, Protestantism is the “new kid on the block.” It is less than three centuries old while the other six religious systems are more than twenty centuries old.

Summarizing, the seven heads represent the seven religious systems of the world: Heathenism, Atheism, Judaism, Eastern Mysticism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Consider this: Currently, every person on Earth is a member of one or a variant of these seven religious systems. God intends to confront all seven religious systems at the same time; therefore, He will unite these diverse and antagonistic religious systems with His first four judgments. Together, they will form a monster sized church-state called Babylon (the leopard-like beast), and Babylon’s senseless behavior will be a showcase of blasphemy, arrogance, and ignorance. Modern Babylon will be far worse than ancient Babylon. Honest-hearted people will see the evidence with their own eyes. They will discover that all religions are blasphemous and worthless. Jesus said, “**Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**” (John 8:32)

Specification 6 Notice the relationship between the great red dragon and the seven heads: “**The beast who once was [in Heaven], and now is not [in Heaven], is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven [heads] and is going to his destruction.**” (Revelation 17:11, insertions mine)

Even though we have investigated enough data to determine the identity of the seven heads on the leopard-like beast, there are two more specifications that we need to include. Remember that Daniel 7

predicted a little horn power would uproot three of the original ten horns. Recorded history reveals that with the help of the Roman Catholic Church, the Ostrogoths, Heruli, and Vandals were uprooted and destroyed by A.D. 538. Just as the Bible predicted, after three of the ten horns were uprooted, the Catholic Church became an eighth horn that ruled over the remaining seven horns for 1,260 years. (Daniel 7:25)

Revelation 17:11 uses parallel language to describe a similar situation. Lucifer, the great red dragon who was cast out of Heaven, will come up from the Abyss at the fifth trumpet. He will masquerade as Almighty God and reign as an eighth king over the seven heads for a short time. Then, during the sixth trumpet, the devil will suddenly abolish the seven religious systems of Earth because there is no room for religious diversity when “god lives among men.” The devil will divide the people of Earth into groups of a thousand and put them to work, building up the “kingdom of God” for a thousand years of peace. Lucifer will appoint ten kings as task masters. **“They [the ten kings] have one purpose [loyalty] and will give their power and authority to the [lamb-like] beast.”** (Revelation 17:13, insertions mine)

Many wicked people will oppose the devil when he sets up his theocracy, especially when he dissolves the seven religious systems of the world, but no one can stop “the man of lawlessness.” To silence the opposition, the devil’s forces will kill a third of mankind. (Revelation 9:15) Notice Paul’s words, **“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the [great] rebellion [against the gospel] occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose [all religions] and will exalt himself over everything that is called God [there will be no God but himself] or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple [displaces God’s supremacy], proclaiming himself to be God.”** (2 Thessalonians 2:3,4, italics and insertions mine) **“And the [devil’s] 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.”** (Revelation 9:15)

Specification 7 There is one final specification that concerns the seven heads and the ten horns. **“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the [leopard-like] beast.”** (Revelation 17:12, insertion mine)

When the leopard-like beast rises to power at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, the seven religious systems of the world (the seven heads) will become more powerful than the world's political leadership. Because the reality of God will be overwhelming and the evidence of His wrath overpowering, the world's political leaders will meekly defer to the direction of the world's religious leaders. What else can they do? These religious leaders will create laws for 890 days and the governments of the world will execute Babylon's demands. When the fifth trumpet occurs, Lucifer will physically appear, and over the course of 150 days, he will convince many of the wicked that he is "Almighty God." At the sixth trumpet, Lucifer will suddenly modify Babylon by establishing a theocracy with himself as Lord of lords and King of kings. To do this, he will claim that he must abolish the seven religious systems because there is no room for religious diversity when "God" lives and reigns among men. The devil will then appoint ten kings to oversee his newly created theocracy.

The Bible appears to say the ten kings and the lamb-like beast will be given authority for sixty minutes (one hour). We know this is not the case because the sixth trumpet sounds about 295 days before the Second Coming. Actually, the intended idea is not translated properly. The Greek word *mia* can mean "one" or "first" – as in "one hour" or in the "first hour." In this case, Lucifer will give authority to ten kings during the first hour of his theocracy. Ten horns will displace seven heads in an hour! Lucifer will abolish the seven heads and empower the ten horns to eliminate religious controversy and to prepare for war with Christ. Lucifer knows that Jesus will soon appear and I believe he wants to have control over Earth's nuclear missiles. **"They [the ten kings] have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast."** (Revelation 17:13, insertion mine)

The seven heads and the ten horns do not share power simultaneously. The (ten) toes of Daniel 2 (see verses 42-44) symbolize Lucifer's ten kings. The Bible does not name or identify the ten kings. In fact, the Bible says very little about them, but we do know this much about the ten kings: **"In the time of those [ten] kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever."** (Daniel 2:44, insertion mine) **"They [the ten kings] have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the [lamb-like] beast. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings – and with**

him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.” (Revelation 17:13,14, insertions mine)

About thirty days before the Second Coming, Lucifer will be unmasked. The wicked will recognize the truth. They will realize that Lucifer is the devil and worse, they know they will share his fate. When this revelation occurs, the wicked will not only loathe Lucifer, but they will also loathe themselves and their participation in his theocracy. The Bible says, **“The beast [leopard-like beast, Babylon] and the ten horns [ten kings] you saw will hate the prostitute [Lucifer’s theocracy]. They will [turn on the great whore and] bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire [their loathing will be so great]. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God’s words are fulfilled.”** (Revelation 17:16,17, insertions mine)

Summary

When all the specifications concerning the leopard-like beast are assembled, Babylon is not too hard to identify. Babylon will be a monster-sized church-state. Babylon will rule over the nations with deadly power. It will persecute and devour those who oppose it. At first, the seven heads (the seven religious systems of the world) will control the leopard-like beast. I understand that the pope will be selected as the leader of Babylon and he will lead the world in appeasing God (actually blaspheming God) until the devil appears at the fifth trumpet. At the sixth trumpet, the devil will suddenly abolish the seven religions of the world and put ten kings in their place. Lucifer will assign these ten kings the task of rebuilding the infrastructures of Earth. The devil will demand the reconstruction of the world for the pseudo-purpose of establishing the kingdom of God and bringing in a thousand years of peace. Of course, this demand is a big lie. The devil will establish ten kings because he wants these kings to try to destroy Jesus at the Second Coming (perhaps by nuclear arms). It is reasonable to assume that labor camps will be set up and everyone will be forced into hard labor. Slavery will be imposed as a form of punishment. Civil authorities will punish those who refuse to work and obey. The devil will kill most of his opposition (a third of mankind) and rule over the world as “Almighty God” without significant opposition for almost a year. It is easy to see how the leopard-like beast mirrors its ancient namesake, the great city of Babylon, whose temporary splendor was created through years of forced labor and destroyed by God in a single night.

The Lamb-like Beast

Thus far, we have examined the identity of three beasts: The Lamb is Jesus, the great red dragon is Lucifer, and the leopard-like beast is Babylon. John does not give a physical description of the fourth beast in Revelation other than this: **“Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a [the] lamb, but he spoke like a [the] dragon.”** (Revelation 13:11, strikethroughs and insertions mine) Notice that I crossed out the indefinite article “a” and inserted the definite article “the” in the previous sentence. I did this to direct your attention to an interesting point. A literal reading of the Greek text says: **“It [the beast coming up out of the earth] had horns two like lamb and spoke as dragon.”** Sometimes, in the Greek language, when a noun does not have an article, the noun is said to be anarthrous.

The Greek language uses anarthrous nouns for emphasis. This grammatical technique is sometimes used to refer to a specific element or character that has been previously introduced. Since *the* Lamb and *the* Dragon were previously introduced in Revelation’s story and since they do not have articles in Revelation 13:11, their presence in Revelation 13 is emphasized through the use of anarthrous nouns. Well meaning English translators supplied the indefinite article “a” in both cases to make the sentence read better, but they should have used definite articles since they are supplied.

John does not describe the second beast in Revelation 13:11. The only thing we know about its appearance is that it has two horns like the Lamb (who had seven horns – Revelation 5:6) and it speaks like the dragon (because it is the devil in sheep’s clothing).

Two Horns

The two horns on this beast indicate the devil will be two kings in one! He will rule over church and state. The seven heads represent the seven religious systems of the world and the ten horns represent the ten kings who the devil appoints during the sixth trumpet. The devil will pretend to be the king of kings and the lord of lords, but we have to remember that Jesus has seven horns! Jesus is omnipotent. Even though Lucifer will appear to be invincible for a season, the Bible assures us that God will destroy Lucifer, his angels, and his government at the proper time. (Daniel 8:25, Revelation 19:19-21)

Lamb-likeness

I call the nondescript beast in Revelation 13:11 the “lamb-like beast” for two reasons: First, this beast speaks like the dragon. This is a strange specification because there is no record of the dragon speaking in the book of Revelation. However, we do know that the devil is deceitful. He is a liar and I think this was John’s reason for saying the lamb-like beast speaks like the dragon. Jesus said of Lucifer, **“When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”** (John 8:44) The devil will masquerade as God, but his words and actions will be lies that are carefully calculated to deceive billions of people. Just as Michael/Jesus, the archangel, put aside “His feathers” to become a man, so Lucifer will be permitted to put aside “his feathers” to become a man. Michael/Jesus came to save the world. (John 3:16) Lucifer will come to destroy the world. (Revelation 9:11)

The second and most obvious reason for calling this beast the “lamb-like beast” is that he will be an imposter of the Lamb. The lamb-like beast will deceive the whole world through his mighty miracles. (2 Thessalonians 2:9,10; Revelation 13:14) In other words, this beast will deceive people of all religions into thinking that he is “God.” He will declare himself to be “God” and he will *prove* his assumed deity by calling fire down out of Heaven at will. (2 Thessalonians 2:4, Revelation 13:13) Since his success depends on clever deception, I think the title, “lamb-like,” is a perfect fit.

The fifth trumpet only lasts five months. During this time, the devil has to quickly deceive the whole world into thinking that he is Almighty God. (Revelation 9:5) To win the confidence of world leaders, the devil will support the laws of Babylon and the efforts of Babylon’s leaders to reduce immoral behavior. The devil will heal the sick, speak wonderful words of hope and comfort, and perform amazing signs and wonders. Working around the clock and constantly traveling around the world with his angels, Lucifer will conduct a glorious campaign that has no equal in Earth’s history. Billions of people who refused to accept the gospel of Christ will embrace the devil on the basis of his counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders. The old adage, “seeing is believing,” will work very well for the devil. (Matthew 24:23)

When the five months are completed, a large majority of the wicked will believe that Lucifer is “God.” At this point, Lucifer will suddenly change character. His charade as a benevolent and loving god will disappear. He will turn into a stern-faced king overnight, worse than Pharaoh, and the leaders of Babylon will be dethroned overnight.

Lucifer will appoint ten kings to impose and enforce his harsh laws on the world. Loving every minute of his despotic plot, the devil will torture the wicked with outrageous religious laws, and he will kill anyone who quibbles against his authority. In fact, four of his angels will kill a third of mankind (Revelation 9:15) and his ten puppet kings will use military force to ensure that rebellion is not tolerated.

The Origin of the Lamb-like Beast

John was given two different views of the devil's appearing. The first view is described in Revelation 9 and the second is described in Revelation 13. In Revelation 9, the devil and his angels imitate the Second Coming. In Revelation 13, the lamb-like beast rises out of the ground as a miracle working world leader.

John wrote, **“Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. . . .”** (Revelation 13:11) There is no geographical difference between the devil being released from the Abyss and the devil coming up out of the earth because the Abyss was a hole in the earth. In John's day, the Abyss or the bottomless pit (KJV) was thought to be a bottomless hole that went through the basin of the earth. If John had said that he saw the lamb-like beast coming up from *the Abyss* in Revelation 13:11, this would have linked up with the release of Lucifer, the angel king, from the Abyss in Revelation 9:1-11 and made the identity of the lamb-like beast much easier to determine. Nevertheless, here is a fascinating point: John mentions “the beast from the Abyss” twice in Revelation (Revelation 11:7 and 17:8), but *the only beast* that can come out of the Abyss is the lamb-like beast because there are only four beasts in the book of Revelation and only one is cast *into* the earth! Here are three reasons (and there may be more) why God obscured the fact that the lamb-like beast is the beast from the Abyss:

1. When we compare the origins of the two beasts in Revelation 13, we find that the leopard-like beast (Babylon) will rise up out of the sea whereas the lamb-like beast will rise up out of the earth. During the vision of the Two Witnesses, John saw Jesus *plant* one foot on the sea and the other on the earth.¹ (Revelation 10:2) This stance reveals Jesus' sovereign authority over the sea (the origin of Babylon), as well as the land (the origin of the lamb-like beast). Consider Christ's authority: He limits Babylon's power to forty-two months (Revelation 13:5) and the devil is only released from the

¹ The Greek word for Earth is *ge* and it is translated “land” about fifty times in the New Testament.

Abyss (a hole in the earth) when Jesus permits. (Revelation 9:1,2; 13:11) Ultimately, God still is in control.

Even though John wrote the book of Revelation about thirty years after Paul's death, the apostle Paul also knew the devil would be allowed to physically appear before mankind. Paul also knew that Jesus would determine the timing of the devil's appearing, not the devil. Consider Paul's words to the church at Thessalonica: **“Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him [the devil, the man of lawlessness] back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret [hidden] power of lawlessness [an invisible devil] is already at work; but the one [Jesus] who now holds it back [the appearing of the devil] will continue to do so till he [Jesus] is taken out of the way [who presently intercedes between the law of God and a rebellious world].”** (2 Thessalonians 2:5-7, italics and insertions mine)

2. A second statement about origins is necessary. The leopard-like beast comes out of the sea and the lamb-like beast comes out of a hole in the ground. The contrast between origins could not be clearer. The leopard-like beast rises up out of the sea and the sea represents nations, peoples, and languages. (Revelation 17:15) In other words, Babylon rises up from within the nations of Earth whereas the lamb-like beast comes out of a hole in the ground. The lamb-like beast does not derive his power and authority from nations, peoples, and languages. Moreover, the origin of the lamb-like beast aligns with Daniel 8 where the devil's appearing is described as coming out of one of the four winds or “out of thin air.” **“Out of one of them [the four winds] came another horn [this horn represents Lucifer, the stern-faced king], which started small [not widely known or in a position to overtake the world at first] but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land [west. In other words, this is a king that comes out of the north¹].”** (Daniel 8:9, insertions mine)

Lucifer Will Inhabit the Form of a Man

Isaiah knew the devil would be permitted to physically appear before the human race. Notice his words: **“How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast**

¹ For a discussion on the importance of “the north,” please see Chapter 4 in my book, *Daniel: Unlocked for the Final Generation*.

down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. *Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: ‘Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a desert, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?’*” (Isaiah 14:12-17, italics mine)

Ezekiel knew that God would permit the devil to physically appear before the human race. Notice his words: “**In the pride of your heart you say, “I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god in the heart of the seas.” But you are a man and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god’ . . . Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘Because you think you are wise, as wise as a god, I am going to bring foreigners against you, the most ruthless of nations; they will draw their swords against your beauty and wisdom and pierce your shining splendor. They will bring you down to the pit, and you will die a violent death in the heart of the seas. Will you then say, “I am a god,” in the presence of those who kill you? You will be but a man, not a god, in the hands of those who slay you.’**” (Ezekiel 28:2,6-9, italics mine)

Paul knew the devil would be permitted to physically appear before the human race. He also knew the devil would proclaim himself to be God. This is why Paul calls the devil “the man of lawlessness” (not subject to human laws). **“He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God. . . . The coming of the lawless one [the physical appearing of the devil masquerading as God] will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They [the wicked] 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 2:4,9-12, italics and insertions mine)

The appearing of the devil will come as an overwhelming surprise to the

wicked. **“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 [lamb-like] beast, because he once was [visible], now is not [visible], and yet will come [out of the earth and be visible].”** (Revelation 17:8, italics and insertions mine)

Because the devil will be permitted to inhabit the form of a man (as Michael/Jesus assumed the form of a man), Lucifer is called a man by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Paul, and John. The devil will come with an army of demons who will look like human beings as well: **“On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. . . . The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.”** (Revelation 9:7,16) Thus, the devil and his demons will physically appear – a huge army of extraterrestrial beings, superior to mankind in every way. They will rise silently from the Abyss and *descend to the earth*, literally, out the air. (Revelation 9:3)

3. Here is a third reason explaining why the lamb-like beast rises from the earth in Revelation 13 instead of the Abyss as in Revelation 9. God gave the Revelation vision to John about A.D. 95. To keep the contents of this vision a mystery for nearly two thousand years, God put the story together in a cryptic way. Through the centuries, many honest-hearted people have tried to make sense of Revelation’s story, but it was not the right time. With God, timing is everything. We know the book of Daniel was sealed up until the time of the end, and now that Daniel has been unsealed, we understand the four rules that govern apocalyptic interpretation. Using valid rules of interpretation helps put the pieces together, so the careful Bible student can learn the intended meaning of Revelation.

Study the following verses and notice that Lucifer and his angels were cast into the earth; therefore, their release from the Abyss is synonymous with coming up out of the earth.

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to [Greek: *into*] the earth, and his angels with him.” (Revelation 12:7-9, insertion mine)

Comment: The Bible says, “He was hurled [into] the Earth.” The Greek

preposition *eis* is sometimes translated “in” or “into.” The idea here is that Lucifer and his angels were hurled *into* the earth “as a stone is hurled *into* a pond.” The stone becomes invisible as a result of being cast into the water. After the devil was hurled into the earth, he became invisible, and at the appointed time, he will be permitted (at the appointed time) to come out of the earth!

“Then I saw another beast, *coming out of the earth*. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.” (Revelation 13:11, italics mine)

“The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star [a holy angel] that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts [a swarm of angels] came *down upon the earth* and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They had *as king over them the angel of the Abyss*, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.” (Revelation 9:1-3,11, italics and insertions mine)

The angel said to John, **“The [great red dragon] beast, which you saw [cast out of Heaven], once was [visible], now is not [visible because he and his angels were cast into the earth], and will come up out of the Abyss [when they are permitted to come up out of the earth and be visible] and [regardless of his invincible powers, Lucifer will] go to his destruction. 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 [lamb-like] beast [with their own eyes], because he once was [visible], now is not [visible], and yet will come [up out of the earth and be visible].”** (Revelation 17:8, insertions mine)

Comment: The glorious appearing of Lucifer will totally shock the wicked. They do not expect to see a majestic “being” standing fifteen to seventeen feet tall who has the kind of power and glory that will attend Lucifer. Even more, they cannot imagine that this gentle and miracle working being would actually be the Antichrist! Revelation 17:8 eliminates a lot of wiggle room because the angel told John, **“The beast which you saw, once was [in Heaven], now is not [in Heaven], and will come up out of the Abyss. . . .”** The only beast who John saw cast *into* the earth was the great red dragon. (Revelation 12:9) Since there is only one beast in Revelation who will come up out of the earth

(Revelation 13:11), Revelation 17:8 forces us to admit that the great red dragon is the lamb-like beast who will be released from the Abyss at the fifth trumpet. Review these verses:

“Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. . . .And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. . . .” (Revelation 13:11,13,14, strikethroughs mine)

Comment: The lamb-like beast will be Lucifer masquerading as God. He will call fire down out of Heaven *to prove* to the wicked that he is truly God. His two horns indicate that he will eventually rule the world as lord of lords (control over the religions of the world) and king of kings (control over the nations of the world). The devil will eventually kill the work and influence of the Two Witnesses with his superior miracles. He will become an eighth king, that is, he will rule over the seven heads for a short time and he will lead the world into open rebellion against God’s covenant, His Ten Commandments.

Summary: Lucifer is the angel king from the Abyss. Lucifer is the lamb-like beast who will rise out of the earth. His title in Hebrew and Greek (for Jews and Gentiles alike) means destroyer. The devil will be released on mankind to destroy the world. He will rise to a position of absolute power, but his power will not come from nations or people. He will deceive the world and lead it to destruction. The release of the devil on the wicked is consistent with the full cup principle. When a majority of people in a group reach a point where extended mercy has no redeeming effect, God always sends a destroyer. **“ . . . They [the wicked] 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, italics and insertion mine)

Now that we have carefully examined and determined the identity of the four beasts in the book of Revelation, we can proceed through the following two prophecies rather quickly:

Prophecy I

Revelation 12:1-6

“A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.” (Revelation 12:1,2)

Comment: This short prophecy is six verses long. It consists of three characters: A pregnant woman standing on the moon, a great red dragon, and a male child who does not remain on Earth. If I could give this prophecy a title, it would be, “Lucifer’s Hatred for Jesus.” Even though this prophecy begins at the time of Christ’s birth, the conflict between Christ and Satan predates the creation of Earth. For thousands of years,¹ the Godhead did everything possible to resolve Lucifer’s disaffection in Heaven, but Lucifer and his followers would not cooperate. Finally, Lucifer led a third of the angels into open rebellion and Jesus kicked them out of Heaven. Because Jesus and His angels triumphed over Lucifer and his angels, Satan’s desire for revenge has been insatiable ever since. He loathes Jesus and this hatred explains, in part, why the devil was prepared and determined to kill Jesus “the moment He was born.”

This prophecy has a cosmic setting. God used objects from the sky such as the sun, moon, and stars to frame this story because elements in this story go beyond events that have transpired on Earth. This story covers thousands of years and involves millions of angels and human beings. John saw a pregnant woman clothed with the sun, who was also wearing a crown of twelve stars and was standing on the moon. The book of Revelation does not treat the sun, moon, and stars as symbols in this passage. *This statement is true because there are no relevant texts defining the sun, moon, and stars² as symbols.* God used a cosmic setting for this story because He wants us to understand the feelings, the actions, and the loathing that Lucifer has for Christ. Who

¹ The Bible does not indicate the length of time that the Godhead spent trying to resolve Lucifer’s feelings and behavior. I am speculating that it was thousands of years because the Godhead has spent thousands of years resolving the sin problem with human beings. I am sure that God loves His angels as much as He loves us, therefore He gave them every opportunity to repent.

² Rule Three of Apocalyptic Prophecy indicates there are three types of language in apocalyptic prophecy: analogous, literal, and symbolic. If an element is thought to be symbolic, the Bible will interpret the symbol with a

else but God could explain something so huge in eight sentences?

The woman standing on the moon is not the virgin Mary. This woman has been persecuted from the beginning. This woman has existed ever since sin began and she was chased into the desert for 1,260 years. This woman represents the people of God, His church, a group of people who are the bride of Christ. (Revelation 19:7) Her position, “standing on the moon,” indicates that she is not of this world. (John 18:36, 1 John 2:15-17) God’s church is not a specific denomination nor does it have buildings of brick and mortar. God’s church consists of honest-hearted people from all ages and they are found in every religious system. This woman is in love with God and God loves her (His people). She is pregnant with His Son. She (His church) loves God with all her (their) heart, mind, and soul and her (their) neighbor as herself (themselves). (Matthew 22:36-40; Ephesians 5:23-27) Jesus came from a long line of people who loved God – people like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. This may sound strange, but the Great Tribulation will prove that there are far more people in God’s church today than all Christian denominations combined!

Jesus used a woman to symbolize His affection for His people the very day that sin began. Jesus told Lucifer, Adam and Eve, **“And I will put enmity [hatred, conflict] between you [Lucifer] and the woman [My people], and between your offspring and hers; he [a male child coming through her] will crush your head [someday], and you**

relevant text. In other words, if something is to be treated as a symbol, the Bible will define the symbol so that everyone who reads the Bible will have the same conclusion. The Bible is its own interpreter. For example, the woman wears a crown of twelve stars. The twelve stars are not symbols of twelve angels. Look at this text: **“In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. . . .”**

(Revelation 1:16) Then, Revelation 1:20 says, **“. . . The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. . . .”** We see here that the seven stars in Revelation 1:16 are seven angels because Revelation 1:20 defines the symbol. In other words, Revelation 1:20 is *relevant* to Revelation 1:16. Now, look at this text: **“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.”** (Revelation 6:12,13) Are the sun, moon, and stars in this passage literal or symbolic? The answer is literal because there is no *relevant* text that defines them as symbols. In summary, the Bible must speak for itself. When it does not define a symbol with a relevant text, no one has the authority to make the element symbolic.)

[Lucifer] **will strike his heel** [so that He will die].” (Genesis 3:15, insertions mine)

The pregnant woman wears a *stephanos* (a winner’s crown) with twelve stars in it. The twelve stars represent the twelve tribes¹ of Israel. (Revelation 7:5-8) Her brilliant, shining garment represents the wedding garment (Matthew 22:11,12) which is the righteousness of Christ. (Romans 1:17) This garment is freely given to every repentant sinner. (Ephesians 2:8,9)

“Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail [pun: tale] swept a third of the stars [angels] out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child *the moment* it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter [indicating His reign on the throne cannot be broken]. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.” (Revelation 12:3-5, italics and insertions mine)

Comment: We know that the red dragon is the devil. (Revelation 12:9) We know that Lucifer tried to kill Jesus “the moment He was born.” (Matthew 2:16) We know that Jesus was taken to Heaven after His death on the cross. (Acts 1:11) We know that Jesus sits on God’s throne. (Acts 7:55,56; Colossians 3:1) We know that Jesus will eventually rule all nations with an iron scepter. (An iron scepter means that His rule cannot be broken. Revelation 19:15) When the devil saw that he could not kill baby Jesus, when the devil saw that he could not keep Jesus in the tomb, and when the devil saw that Jesus had returned to Heaven and was out of his reach, he directed his hatred for God at the woman.

“The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.” (Revelation 12:6)

Comment: It is ironic that the devil used “the visible Church” to persecute “the invisible church.” This concept is difficult to explain, but it must be understood. When Jesus established His church, you could say that a new religious system was established even though the woman

¹ Please read Chapters 7 and 8 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*, for a discussion on who constitutes Israel in the book of Revelation.

already existed. The new religious system was a visible church. It became an *organized* body of believers. The visible church was defined by creeds and doctrine, and human beings directed it as they sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 16:19; Acts 15) The visible church had members, buildings, and programs. On the other hand, the woman consists of born again individuals, those who supremely love God and their neighbors and uphold God's advancing truth. These individuals follow the leading of the Holy Spirit – wherever He leads. The woman exists only in God's sight. Individuals who make up the woman may worship in a visible church, but the woman and the visible church are two distinct entities and this confuses a lot of people. Man looks on the outer appearance, but God reads the heart. Individuals who have a pure heart, regardless of their religious persuasion, are members of the woman, God's invisible church. God's people may be members of a visible church, but membership in a visible church does not mean anything to God.

This visible/invisible principle is explained in Romans 9. Go over this carefully: **“For not all who are descended from Israel [Jacob] are Israel [belong to Jacob in God's sight]. Nor because they are his [biological] descendants are they all Abraham's children [in terms of salvation, biological heritage is meaningless]. On the contrary, [God rejected Abraham's plea that Ishmael, his first born son, should be the heir to the covenant. Genesis 17:15-22 God said, ‘No,] ‘It is through Isaac [the miracle baby] that your offspring will be reckoned.’ In other words, it is not the natural children [biological offspring] who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise [those who have experienced the miracle of spiritual birth] who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.”** (Romans 9:6-8)

After the first century A.D., the visible church and the invisible church drifted apart. By the fifth century A.D., the visible church in Rome had taken control of doctrine and leadership, and those who loved truth and followed the Spirit were actually regarded as her enemies. The devil took control of the visible church and used it to persecute the invisible church. This warfare will be repeated. During the Great Tribulation a very visible Babylon will make war against everyone keeping God's commandments and holding to the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 12:17)

The woman fled to the desert for survival. The desert represents a desolate hiding place and the 1,260 days defines her period of persecution. The time, times, and half a time mentioned in Daniel 7:25, Revelation 12:14 and the 1,260 days of Revelation 12:6 are the same time period. (A.D. 538-1798) This can be confusing, I know, but the prophecy

in Revelation 12 spans many centuries. Beginning in A.D. 538 and finishing in A.D. 1798, this prophecy covers 1,260 years. The Jubilee Calendar is in operation during this period, therefore the 1,260 days must be translated as 1,260 years (Rule Four of Apocalyptic Prophecy).

Keeping the Identity of the Dragon on Track

Many prophetic expositors violate valid rules of interpretation in Revelation 12 because they want to make the enormous red dragon into something other than the devil. History does affirm that the devil worked through the little horn in Daniel 7 (the Roman Catholic Church) to persecute the saints for 1,260 years, but the enormous red dragon in Revelation 12 *is not* the papacy. If, in our rush to understand apocalyptic prophecy, we ignore or manipulate the specifications which God has given, we will never be able to arrive at the intended meaning of prophecy. Follow the logic: The enormous red dragon tried to kill Jesus at birth *through Herod*. Then, the great red dragon used the Roman Catholic Church to chase the woman into the desert for 1,260 years. The devil is a determined demon. He is not Herod nor is he the Roman Catholic Church. This brings me to the second point, which is also very important.

The leopard-like beast is not the devil even though the devil will control the beast! (Revelation 13:2) When studying the behavior of people or organizations, it is sometimes difficult to determine the extent of control the devil has because generally speaking, adults have the ability to exercise their power of choice. Therefore, we have to ask, “Does the devil really influence people, and by extension, organizations, to do things they would otherwise not do?” Consider these verses:

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.” (1 Peter 5:8,9, italics mine)

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7, italics mine)

The Bible does indicate that the devil and his demons can and must be resisted or they may take control of us. We know demon possession is possible because Jesus cast demons out of many people. See Matthew 8:28-33.

Summary: We have examined Lucifer’s hatred for Jesus in this first

prophecy. This loathing has not changed. If it were possible, Lucifer would kill Jesus right now. Jesus has demonstrated God's love for mankind in ways that transcend human comprehension. Jesus did not have to go to the cross, but infinite love caused Him to be willing to give up His eternal life so that we might have it. Can you imagine killing the very person who would volunteer to die in your place? Lucifer's hatred for Jesus shows the malevolent and hideous nature of sin. We have also learned that the devil uses demon possessed people and organizations to carry out his evil desires. Lucifer, once the greatest and highest of created beings, has become a senseless beast, a raving destroyer. His human instruments have been diverse – from the Pharisees, the Caesars, and the Church of Rome, to rulers like Herod, Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, and Hussein. After chasing the woman for 1,260 years, he has one final chance to destroy her. He is waiting for the leopard-like beast to rise.

Prophecy II

Revelation 12:7-14:5

If this second prophecy could be given a title, I would call it, "Lucifer's Hatred for the Woman." This prophecy shifts our focus from Lucifer's hatred for Jesus to his hatred for the woman – the followers of Jesus. We have already noticed that the first prophecy began with the birth of Jesus and ended with Lucifer chasing the woman into the desert for 1,260 years. This prophecy begins with a war on Resurrection Sunday (Revelation 12:7) and it ends with the 144,000 standing around the Lamb on Mt. Zion and singing a new song. (Revelation 14:5)

The first scene in this prophecy opens triumphantly! Jesus has kicked Lucifer out of Heaven. The final scene in this prophecy also ends triumphantly! Johns sees the 144,000 standing with Jesus on Mt. Zion. This final scene is very important to the people who will live during the Great Tribulation because most, if not all, of the 144,000 will be killed in the line of duty and the remnant of the woman will be totally decimated. (Daniel 12:7; Revelation 13:7) But, do not be discouraged, "Victory Day" will come! Even though the remnant of the woman will be crushed beyond recognition and the wicked will temporarily rejoice, the victory over the leopard-like beast, the lamb-like beast, the image of the beast, and the mark of the beast will surely come to God's saints! **"This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints."** (Revelation 13:10) **"Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days."** (Daniel 12:12)

As you study this prophecy, it is important that you see four chronological segments. First, there is war in Heaven and persecution of the woman for 1,260 years. Second, the leopard-like beast rises from the sea. Third, the lamb-like beast rises from the earth. Finally, the 144,000 are taken to Heaven to gather around Jesus. Right now we are living between the first and second segments, Revelation 12:17 and 13:1. At this point in Earth's history, we have reached an excellent perch. We can examine the progression of prophecy over the past 2,000 years, and we can look "around the corner" and see what is coming in the near future. In other words, this prophecy began on Resurrection Sunday and according to my calculations, it has less than ten years to go until it is completed. (**Note:** Please understand that if time should last longer than ten years, this will have no effect on the meaning or the fulfillment of this prophecy. It just means that my calculation on the whereabouts of the 6,000th year of sin is incorrect.)

With these things said, let us begin this study with Revelation 12:7. This is the first verse of a new prophecy because, according to Rule One of Apocalyptic Prophecy, chronological order is broken between verses 6 and 7. In other words, the war in Heaven (verse 7) occurs *before* the dragon chases the woman to the desert (verse 6); therefore, a new prophecy begins because chronological order is broken.

Resurrection Sunday

“And there was war in heaven [on Resurrection Sunday]. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled [in]to the earth, and his angels with him.” (Revelation 12:7-9, insertions mine)

Comment: These verses describe Lucifer's second and final eviction from Heaven. This eviction took place on Resurrection Sunday. Because every war has a history of conflict, we have to start at the beginning of this story to understand the war that took place on Resurrection Sunday.

When God cast Lucifer out of Heaven the first time (Isaiah 14:12-17, Ezekiel 28:12-19), God did not completely sever relations with the devil and his angels. Even though Lucifer was not permitted to live in Heaven, God did permit Lucifer to attend specific meetings in Heaven. (Job 1) God continued to treat Lucifer with utmost respect and

kindness because there is no hatred, evil, or fear in God's heart. (Remember, God loves His enemies just as much as He loves His friends and He commands us to do the same. Luke 6:27-36)

After Lucifer led Eve and then Adam into sin, God crowned Lucifer as "the prince of this world." (John 12:31) As the prince of this world, God permitted Lucifer to join with princes from other worlds when administrative meetings were called in Heaven. At these meetings, it appears that the angels discussed matters pertaining to the governance of the universe. (Job 1:6) This information is pertinent for two reasons. First, as "the prince of this world," the devil was granted entrance into God's presence whenever administrative meetings were held. Second, when Jesus died on the cross and shed His own blood, Jesus paid a great price to redeem and possess Earth. When Jesus ascended to Heaven on Resurrection Sunday, He immediately proceeded to take Lucifer's position away from him. As stubborn and rebellious as he is, "the prince of this world" refused to acknowledge Christ's redemption payment and war broke out in Heaven between Christ and Satan for a second time.

Note: You may recall that Lucifer tempted Jesus in the desert. The devil promised to give the world to Jesus if Jesus would bow down and worship him (Luke 4:7,8), but Jesus knew (a) worshiping anyone other than God is blasphemy, and (b) Lucifer's offer was a lie because the devil had no intention of giving the world to Jesus. Everything in the universe belongs to the Father and Jesus knew the Father would give Him this world if He faithfully carried out the plan of salvation. The Father dethroned Lucifer as "the prince of this world" when He gave the world to Jesus on Resurrection Sunday, but this transaction led to war in Heaven again. (Psalm 2:7,8; 24:7-10; John 17:6)

The Bible indicates that the war described in Revelation 12:7-9 occurred on Resurrection Sunday (April 9, A.D. 30). Many Christians erroneously think this war occurred *before* Adam and Eve sinned, but according to Scripture, this is not possible. Here is why:

When Jesus cast Lucifer out of Heaven, a powerful declaration was heard throughout Heaven's court: "**Then I [John] heard a loud voice in heaven say: 'Now [that is, at this time] have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.'**" (Revelation 12:10; See also Matthew 28:18.) Using His Commander-in-Chief powers as Michael the archangel, Jesus and His angels drove Lucifer and his angels out of Heaven's court and a victorious Jesus took over as Earth's representative in Heaven's court.

Jesus was given this honor on the basis of His perfect redemption – much to the delight of the holy angels. Then, the verse continues as an angel proclaimed: **“For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.”** (Revelation 12:10, continued) Consider the last sentence again. Lucifer is called the accuser “of our brothers.” The angels call us their brothers! Think about this. If this war occurred *before* Adam and Eve sinned, then sinful people would not have existed and there would be no one for Lucifer to accuse. Lucifer’s accusations began *after* Adam and Eve sinned. Lucifer taunted God with accusations from time to time that God’s government was unfair because He granted grace and forgiveness to human beings and not to angels. These accusations were baseless because God waited patiently for the angels to repent, but they would not. Twice in the Bible, Lucifer is rebuked for promoting baseless arguments. See Zechariah 3:2 and Jude 1:9.

Revelation 12:10 is a punctilliar declaration: **“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God. . . .”** This declaration could only be made after the price for man’s salvation had been paid. When Jesus walked out of the tomb, the devil and his angels realized their fate and they had no intention of yielding to an honorable defeat. He would not give up his seat in Heaven’s court as “the prince of this world” to someone he loathed. The only way the devil would surrender to Christ was through force, and that is exactly what happened. Jesus forced the devil and his angels out of Heaven!

Consider the next verse and notice that the last word is “short.” This word is significant in this context because Lucifer’s demise is coming. If Lucifer was 100,000 years old when he was cast out of Heaven on Resurrection Sunday, another 3,000 years (counting from the death of Jesus to the end of the 1,000 years in Revelation 20) is “short” indeed. **“Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them** [because Jesus has prevailed and the devil has been cast out of here forever]! **But woe to the earth** [land] **and the sea** [people and nations of the whole world], **because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his** [remaining] **time is short.”** (Revelation 12:12)

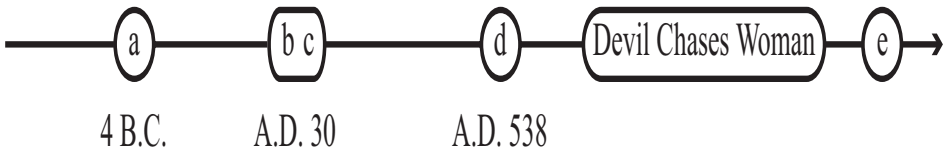
Devil Cast out of Heaven *after* Jesus Was Born

The Bible says the war in Revelation 12:7-9 took place *after* Jesus was born. Study the chronology that is declared in this text: **“When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who *had given birth* to the male child.”** (Revelation

12:13, italics mine) We can easily chart verse 13.

Revelation 12:13

- a. The birth of Jesus
- b. The death of Jesus
- c. The devil cast out of Heaven



- d. The beginning of the 1,260 years
- e. Deadly wound inflicted on papacy

Chart 14.1

There is no wiggle room. Verse 13 says that *after* the devil was cast out of Heaven, he chased the woman *who had given birth* to the male child. Therefore, the war in Revelation 12:7 had to occur between 4 B.C. and A.D. 538.

Driven out of Heaven a Second Time

There is one more passage in Scripture that we need to consider. A few hours before His arrest and death, Jesus went to the temple and said, **“Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!’ Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.’ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, ‘This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now [at this time] is the time for judgment on this world [that is, the moment of truth has now come to see who will win the contest for Earth]; now [at this time] the prince of this world will be driven out [of Heaven. He will lose his seat in Heaven’s court as Earth’s representative].’”** (John 12:27-31, insertions mine)

Adding John 12 to our study, we can assemble three facts. First, Revelation 12:10 is a punctiliar announcement, **“Now have come the**

salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.” This declaration could only be made after (a) the price for salvation had been paid, and (b) the devil had been permanently cast out. When God clothes a repentant sinner with the perfect life of Jesus, the devil cannot say a word. In theological terms, the angels said, “Justification has silenced the accuser of our brothers.” Second, Revelation 12:13 allows no wiggle room. The war in Revelation 12:7-9 occurred between 4 B.C. and A.D. 538. Third, Jesus predicted in John 12:27-31 that the prince of this world would be driven out [of Heaven]. Putting these three facts together, the following passage makes perfect sense: **“At this, she [Mary] turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ‘Woman,’ he said, ‘why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?’ Thinking he was the gardener, she said, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.’ Jesus said to her [in a familiar tone], ‘Mary.’ [Her ears knew that voice.] She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means My Teacher). Jesus said, ‘Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, “I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”’”** (John 20:14-17, italics and insertions mine)

Jesus was returning to His Father so He could drive Lucifer out of Heaven. The Father had promised to give this world to Jesus and He had to go and receive His inheritance. Even though Jesus gave up His life and He perfectly obeyed the will of the Father, Lucifer was still unwilling to yield his position to Jesus and step down. His loathing of Christ produced the second war in Heaven. Once again, Lucifer was thrown out of Heaven at the speed of lightning – this time for good!

After reviewing the background on the long conflict between Christ and Satan, this warning is easier to understand: **“But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”** (Revelation 12:12)

Look over Lucifer’s report card:

1. Lucifer and one-third of the angels rebelled against God. Lucifer tried to stay in Heaven. Failed.

2. Lucifer deceived Eve. Adam fell, too. Lucifer became prince of this world. Success.
3. Lucifer led the antediluvians to openly defy God. Success.
4. Lucifer led the Israelites into apostasy over and over. Success.
5. Lucifer tried to kill Jesus at birth. Failed.
6. Lucifer tried to get Jesus (at His weakest moment) to worship him. Failed.
7. Lucifer tried to keep Jesus in the tomb by sealing it with a huge stone. Failed.
8. Lucifer tried to keep his position in Heaven's government. Failed.
9. Lucifer tried to keep the truth about Christ's resurrection a secret. Failed.
10. Defeated and loathing Christ, Lucifer tried to destroy the woman for 1,260 years. Failed.

The Chase Begins

“The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days. . . . They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” (Revelation 12:6,11)

Comment: After Jesus ascended to Heaven, the devil used the Jews and the Romans to persecute Christians with unbelievable zeal. The Jews hated the Christians because they were tearing down the traditions of Judaism. (Remember the stoning of Stephen and Jesus confronting Saul on the road to Damascus?) The Romans hated the Christians because they thought Christians were another Jewish sect and they hated the Jews. (Remember the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70?) Today, most Christians do not understand or appreciate the decimating persecution that fell upon the early church during the first five centuries after Jesus returned to Heaven. The Romans drove the woman into hiding, but the implosion of the Roman Empire forced the devil to take another approach to keep the woman out of sight. He had very few options, so the devil joined the Church at Rome! Working through carnal minded church leaders, Lucifer gained control of the visible church. Amazing as it sounds, by A.D. 538, the visible church was actually persecuting the invisible church. The devil was

determined to eliminate the woman, but Jesus would not allow him to destroy all of His saints.

The Bible says, **“The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.”** (Revelation 12:6) Because God’s wisdom goes beyond human comprehension and because His ways never deviate from perfect love, God can be very difficult to understand at times. Our understanding of God and His love can be miles away from the truth. The divide between a changeless God and our finite understanding of Him and His plans may remain unknown until a crisis occurs. For example, millions of Christians have been led to believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. They refuse to accept the idea that a God of love would allow His saints to remain on Earth to suffer persecution and harm during the Great Tribulation. I have several objections to the theory of a pre-tribulation rapture which I will share before I address the issue of God permitting His saints to suffer persecution.

Three Rapture Obstacles

The Bible does not support a pre-tribulation rapture for several reasons and here are at least three: First, a pre-tribulation rapture requires a pre-tribulation judgment. For this theory to be true, it means God has to judge the living *before* the Great Tribulation begins to determine who can be raptured and who has to be “left behind.” Moreover, this also means that if God judges a person to be unfit for the rapture, then that sinner will have a second chance at receiving salvation during the Great Tribulation. The Bible refutes both ideas. Second, the Bible says the devil is preparing to make war on the last or the remnant of the woman. **“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring – those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”** (Revelation 12:17) The Bible also says the leopard-like beast will make war against *the saints* during the Great Tribulation. **“He was given power to make war against *the saints* and to conquer them. . . .”** (Revelation 13:7, italics mine) How can the devil and leopard-like beast make war on the remnant of the woman (the saints) if they are in Heaven? Third, Bible history and secular history affirms that God’s people have suffered persecution and harm ever since sin began. (Hebrews 11) Abel was slain because he obeyed the Lord. (Hebrews 11:4) Nine of the twelve apostles were martyred for their faith. Jesus was beaten and murdered and He told 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. . . . 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.” (John 15:20; 16:2)

The rapture concept seems incongruous when we know that God deliberately handed the woman (the saints) over to the Roman Catholic Church for 1,260 years of persecution! Consider this text: “**He** [the little horn, the Roman Catholic Church] **will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.**” (Daniel 7:25, italics and insertion mine) Who handed the saints over to the little horn power if not God? God protected the woman from extinction, not persecution. More than fifty million Christians died for their faith during the Dark Ages! If God allowed the woman to suffer persecution for 1,260 years, there is no reason “the rest of the woman” should be protected from persecution during the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 13:5-7) I could go on and on about the shortcomings of the rapture doctrine, but you should understand this point: God does not view persecution as a horrible thing because His grace is more than sufficient for every challenge that His children may face.

Corporately speaking, I believe persecution has a very valuable benefit for God’s people or why would God allow it? Please consider the following three statements and keep in mind that God’s treatment of the woman – during the Dark Ages and the Great Tribulation – is consistent with His changeless character of love. Keep in mind His wisdom goes beyond comprehension.

Persecution for Christ’s sake purifies our devotion to God. When people are persecuted for humbly doing the will of God, they have no bitterness or anger toward their predators because they accept *through faith* that it is God’s will that they pay the price that His truth demands. When faced with persecution for Christ’s sake, the importance of God’s Word becomes paramount. The fires of persecution separate the faith-full (the gold) from the faith-less (the dross). When the Great Tribulation begins, everyone (including Christians) who obeys the first angel’s message will soon face persecution. Our Creator’s demand to worship Him on His Sabbath will stand in direct opposition to Babylon’s demand. Many Christians will suddenly discover that they really do not have faith in Christ. They will cry out, “Oh God, how could you let this happen to me?” There is a huge difference between **submission** to the gospel and

an **admission** that the gospel is true.

Peter's experience is recorded in the Bible because he perfectly mirrors the difference between admission and submission. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter was bold, ready to die for His Jesus. When the mob rushed into the garden to lay hands on Jesus, Peter whipped out his fisherman's knife and a brief scuffle ensued. He managed to cut off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant. (John 18:10) Six hours later, in Pilate's judgment hall, this same courageous Peter denied that he even knew Jesus.

Peter did not know it, but he had no faith in God. Peter *admitted* that Jesus was the Messiah. (Matthew 16:16) Peter expected Jesus to set up His kingdom on Earth. (Matthew 20:21-28) Peter admitted that he loved Jesus. **“But Peter declared, ‘Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.’ And all the other disciples said the same.”** (Matthew 26:35) When the mob showed up, Peter proved he was ready to fight and die for Christ, but out of self-defense. When Peter saw that Jesus was not going to defend Himself and overcome His enemies, Peter denied that he knew Jesus because Peter was not prepared to share in Christ's condemnation and death. *It is one thing to die in self defense or in the defense of God and country, but it is altogether another matter to suffer death for no other reason than God requires it.* This is the beauty of Isaac surrendering to his father on Mt. Moriah. Jesus said, **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself [our self interests] and take up his cross [the will of God] and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”** (Matthew 16:24,25) When the rooster crowed a third time, Peter had an epiphany. When he saw Jesus humbly submitting to inhumane treatment, he began to understand the meaning of submission to the will of God. In that moment, Peter's head knowledge moved to his heart. He became ashamed of himself and wept bitterly. Peter realized for the first time that it was God's will for Jesus to die. When Peter discovered that faith in God means total submission to God's will, Peter was transformed and he surrendered himself to God's will that day. Persecution purifies the soul of the persecuted and it often changes the hearts of those who observe such submission. Persecution refines us, puts our “self” aside, and makes God's will central in our lives. Jesus said, **“This third I will bring into the fire [of persecution]; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The Lord is our God.’”** (Zechariah 13:9, insertion mine)

Persecution kept the faith of the woman pure for 1,260 years. When Jesus spoke to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, the Christian faith was only sixty-five years old. Already, six of the seven churches in Asia Minor had become corrupted by false doctrines. Because religion mutated quickly, God allowed the devil to chase the woman into the desert. God knows the desert is a good place for training people. This is why He took Israel into the desert when they first came out of Egypt. I call God's use of the desert, "Desert University." When a person, nation, or church is exiled to the desert, God has to be depended upon for everything. The desert is an unforgiving place, a hostile place, a lonely place, and not a place that allows self-indulgence and self-reliance. The carnal nature hates the desert. It seeks pleasure and luxury, and it wants the "easy life." However, joy can be found in the desert because sanctification expands the ability of the heart to love God and man, and it redirects our motives from self-seeking to selfless service. "Desert U" teaches discernment and insight. This holistic experience is called "walking with God." **"This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God."** (Genesis 6:9, italics mine) Looking at human nature, and knowing that God's wisdom is perfect, we have to admit that putting the woman in the desert for 1,260 years had to be the best thing that God could do for her.

Humility is the soil that nurtures faith in God, God's promises are the sunshine, and the Holy Spirit is the rain. Living by faith is like putting on a blindfold, taking hold of Christ's arm, and following wherever He leads. When Jesus is leading, there is no way to know where you are going, but your destination is secure! God's people are usually alone in this world. Family and friends rarely understand or appreciate the faith experience. In fact, family and friends are often opposed to the faith experience. Jesus said, **"A man's enemies will be the members of his own household."** (Matthew 10:36) I have mentioned these matters because there is joy at "Desert U" – and God covers all the room, board, education, and security for you! If necessary, He can make food fall from the sky and water flow from the rocks. **"The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God . . ."** (Revelation 12:6, italics mine)

The final benefit that comes from persecution is exclusion. Persecution keeps those who love the world and the things of this world out of the invisible church. When the threshold for being a Christian is suffering, the woman remains healthy. When the threshold for being a Christian is easy, the church suffers. The visible church differs from the invisible

church in an interesting way. This visible church exalts unity at the expense of truth. The invisible church exalts advancing truth, social consequences notwithstanding.

The pure in heart are the poor in spirit (ego). These people are willing to make whatever sacrifice is necessary because they seek only to glorify God and to help their neighbor. Jesus said, **“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”** (Matthew 5:10-12) God’s people do not serve Him because they want to avoid Hell and achieve Heaven! The woman loves God even if there is nothing beyond this life, because she has found peace, joy, and the sustaining grace that comes through total submission to God’s will. This experience is called “overcoming the world.” **“They [the saints] overcame him [the devil] by [their faith in] the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”** (Revelation 12:11)

The Woman Survives

The Bible describes the 1,260 years the saints suffered by saying, **“The woman [the invisible church] was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach.”** (Revelation 12:14, insertion mine)

Comment: The language, “the two wings of a great eagle,” indicates a miraculous escape, not from persecution, but from extinction. Some historians estimate that fifty million people were martyred for their faith during the Dark Ages, but miraculously, the invisible church did not perish! No doubt, many Protestants wished for the wings of a great eagle as they languished in filthy dungeons. Even though Prophecy 1 (Revelation 12:1-6) and Prophecy 2 (Revelation 12:7-14:5) are separate and distinct prophecies, the time, times, and half a time in verse 6 is the *same* time period as the 1,260 days mentioned in verse 14. Because the Bible describes the *same* time period in two different ways, we know that a time, times, and half a time equals 1,260 day/years. This information also proves that the time, times, and half a time mentioned in Daniel 7:25 equals 1,260 years. The Bible also predicted that the

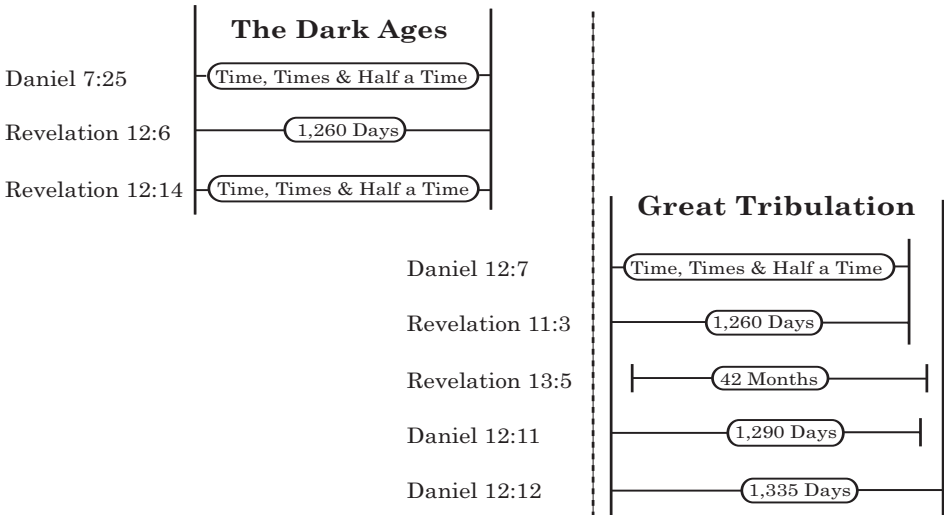
little horn would persecute the saints for 1,260 day/years (Daniel 7:25) and history confirms the fulfillment of these prophecies. In other words, the 1,260 year (A.D. 538-1798) time period is mentioned three times in the Bible. All three instances must be translated using a day for a year because the Jubilee Calendar is operating during this time.

Note: For reasons presented in the chapter on the Two Witnesses, the time, times, and half a time in Daniel 12:7 and the 1,260 days granted to the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11:3 are the *same* time period. The 1,335 days given in Daniel 12:12 represent the total time allotted to the Great Tribulation. Because these time periods occur after the expiration of the Jubilee Calendar in 1994, these time periods should be considered a literal time of 1,335 days and should not be translated a day for a year.

Parallel Time Periods

Chart 14.2

“Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river [a flood, KJV], to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the
 538 1798 Today



torrent.” (Revelation 12:15)

Comment: This is a surprising contradiction. John saw the enormous red dragon spew *water* out of his mouth! This is surprising because ancient dragons were believed to be “fire breathing creatures.” God

surprises us with an interesting point using a reverse caricature. A torrent of water is one of nature's most destructive forces. Weighing a little more than sixty-two pounds per cubic foot, a torrent of water traveling at a high rate of speed is a deadly and utterly destructive force, but it is not annihilating. In other words, life resumes after a flash flood; in fact, vegetation often prospers after a flood. The language in this verse indicates the devil did his best to destroy God's people during the Dark Ages through legislation. The dragon spoke (an endless torrent of laws) through church edicts. The devil tried to destroy the woman with wave after wave of persecution, but the blood of martyrs only fueled the growth of the invisible church.

The devil soon realized that perpetual persecution required perpetual darkness. In 1401, the devil moved upon King Henry IV to decree that anyone owning or producing a translation of the Bible would be burned at the stake. In 1409, Archbishop Thomas Arundel imposed punitive measures on anyone who would presume to produce any written material that departed from the Latin Vulgate. (In other words, Bible texts could not be translated into the common language of the people.) These and other vicious threats did not keep the woman from the Bible. Prior to Gutenberg's invention of moveable type for printing presses in 1439, Bibles were very rare. But Gutenberg's invention enabled Bible distribution to flourish, so the devil prompted governmental leaders to outlaw Bible reading! In 1543, England's Parliament passed a law forbidding common women to read the Bible and the penalty was death!

Using the church as a puppet, the devil made it impossible for anyone to disagree with pope or priest without suffering the harshest of penalties. Open speech against the Church and/or its leaders was considered hate speech or blasphemy, and heretics were often condemned to death on the testimony of one witness. When the church rules over the state, religious freedom becomes a myth. The church ruled by fear, not love. The devil found a way to torment millions of good-hearted Catholics through false doctrines. For example, Catholics were led to believe that salvation required the receipt of seven sacraments. Consequently, very few parishioners spoke out about the excesses and abuses of the clergy because the cessation of sacraments meant the loss of eternal life. For 1,260 long, dark years, the devil did everything possible to make life miserable for the people of Europe, whether in the visible church or the invisible church.

“But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.” (Revelation 12:16)

Comment: After Noah’s flood, God divided Earth into continents. (Genesis 10:25) For thousands of years, God reserved a large parcel of Earth that would one day help the woman. Over time, this parcel of land became known as the United States of America. Just twenty-two years before the end of the 1,260 years (1798), God raised up a new nation (1776) to serve His purposes. He gave this nation a form of government that was unlike anything the world has ever seen. Today, we call it a “Democracy.” God did not raise up the United States of America for the sole benefit of its citizens; rather, God established the United States for a divine purpose.

God gave Protestants a place where they could freely translate and publish the Bible in hundreds of languages. He also gave Protestants vast resources and much wealth so they could spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. From 1798 onward, the United States has produced more Christian missionaries, published more Bibles, and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ farther than all other nations on Earth combined. The citizens of this wealthy nation have given more money for Christian missions than all other nations combined. These endeavors fulfilled God’s plan that Earth would help the woman! Today, approximately nine percent of the world’s population is Protestant. This is amazing considering that Protestants in 1798 amounted to less than 0.1% of the world’s population. This phenomenal growth occurred because immigrants came to the United States of America seeking religious freedom. From this Protestant country, Protestantism spread around the globe. Of course, millions of non-Protestants also immigrated to this country because they wanted to live in a land blessed with opportunity and promise. The United States of America has shared more of its wealth with other nations than any other. Earth physically helped the woman, and the United States became a powerful influence for the gospel of Christ in a short period of time.

Unfortunately, the United States has turned away from honoring and serving God. As a nation, it no longer exalts our Creator with its actions. Christians are entertained with sinful behavior that is constantly glamorized on television and in movies. U.S. printing presses produce more filth and garbage than its population can digest. Its radio stations spew hate talk and music that glorifies drugs, sexual immorality, and violence. Occasionally, citizens might hear a political leader say “God

bless America,” but how can God bless the United States when corporately speaking, its national behavior is an insult? The United States is in a state of moral and financial decline. Many of the nation’s leaders (both political and religious) are corrupt. Love for money and pleasure has displaced love for God and His Word. Integrity is disappearing. Honesty and transparency in business and government is fading. Sexual immorality is rampant. Clergy have become multimillionaires and priests have sexually abused thousands of children. The United States has offended and lost many of its international friends, it has squandered much of its wealth on selfish indulgence, and if the Lord does not come soon, the country will fall, just like all of the great nations in history. The Earth did help the woman, but that helping hand is gone and the remnant of the woman is wondering how much longer will God tolerate this planet before casting down the censer.

The Final Assault Will Soon Begin

“[Unable to destroy the woman for 1,260 years] Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off [to prepare] to make war against the rest [KJV: the remnant] of her offspring – those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”
(Revelation 12:17, insertions mine)

Comment: When the papacy received a fatal wound in 1798, the devil called off the chase. Even though he had made the woman miserable for 1,260 years, he realized he could not destroy her. Being the devil that he is though, he did not give up. He went off to regroup and make plans for a final assault. Lucifer and his demons know all about the Great Tribulation. They understand every verse in the Bible. They were present when every event written in the Bible took place and they personally knew each Bible writer and person mentioned in the Bible! They understand the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation better than we do and the demons know they will be given one final chance to destroy the saints. Of course, the demons also know that they will be destroyed at the end of sin’s drama. Since there is nothing they can do about that, they intend to destroy as many saints as possible before their doom arrives. This is the way hatred works. Lucifer knows that he is going to die just as Jesus knew that He was going to die. Their respective actions and attitudes show the enormous gulf between hatred and love, between selfishness and selflessness.

The devil and his demons have had over 200 years to prepare for their final war against the woman. The stage is set. The world is consumed

with idolatry, greed, sexual immorality, and violence. The devil has carefully studied world conditions. He has strategically placed his demons and human agents (demon possessed people) in highest places. He is delighted that even though hundreds of millions of Christians have Bibles, the vast majority of them are virtually ignorant of his coming ambush. The devil keeps this information hidden from view in various ways. Prejudice and apathy work very well. When someone says that Jesus is coming soon, Christians often respond, “No one knows the day and hour of Christ’s return. Why, people have been saying ‘Wolf, wolf!’ for 2,000 years. Anyone speaking about the imminent return of Jesus is just crying ‘Wolf, wolf!’” Pastors usually agree. Many churches discourage or even prohibit discussion of new ideas on Bible prophecy because it is seen as being potentially divisive. Too many churches are more concerned about unity than truth. They think it is far better to be united in error than to be divided over truth. The Bible has been put in lock down. It is not allowed to speak for itself. Christians are told the Bible is too complicated to understand on its own merit and must be left to the scholars to decipher. How can the Bible teach Christians truths that they do not know and do not want to hear? If we limit what the Bible can say, how can it say something that is new and relevant?

Consider the following text and especially notice the last half of the sentence: **“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman [the invisible church] and went off to make war against the rest [the last or the remnant] of her offspring – those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”** (Revelation 12:17, insertion mine) During the Great Tribulation, the invisible church will become very visible! The remnant of the woman will be identified by two key features:

1. The saints will obey God’s Commandments – all twelve of them! The two greatest commandments are these: **“Love the Lord with all your heart, mind and soul and your neighbor as yourself.”** (Matthew 22:37-40) Expressions of love for God and man are not defined by human beings! Instead, our Creator has defined what love will do within the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments declare *how* love for God will be expressed and the remaining six commandments define *how* love for our neighbor will be expressed. When we do the things required by the law *out of love for God and man*, we fulfill the law! (Romans 13:10)

Currently, most of God’s people are unaware of their obligation to obey the Ten Commandments, especially the fourth commandment.

This will change. When the 144,000 proclaim, “Worship Him who created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the fountains of waters, and honor His holy Sabbath day,” people will think God’s servants are fanatics. But when Babylon forms and implements laws mandating the observance of holy days, the issue will become serious and the question will be, “Which day does God declare sacred?” The 144,000 will boldly address this question and the importance of God’s Sabbath will become widely known. God’s Word clearly states that His people will obey the Ten Commandments because they love God and man. The fourth commandment declares Saturday, the seventh day of the week, is God’s holy day. This commandment will become an inflammatory issue during the Great Tribulation because Babylon will defy and oppose the fourth commandment. In countries where Catholicism and Protestantism are a majority, laws exalting the sacredness of Sunday will be enforced. In countries where Islam is the majority, laws exalting the sacredness of Friday will be enforced. In Israel, laws exalting the sacredness of Saturday¹ will be enforced. The laws of Babylon will cause the remnant of the woman to stand out like evergreen trees in a snow covered forest.

¹ The 144,000 will begin their ministry proclaiming, **“Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. *Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.*”** (Revelation 14:7, italics mine) True worship is prompted by the Holy Spirit and is the natural response of loving obedience. Jesus said, **“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”** (John 14:15) **“Do not be like Cain [who was offended because God showed no respect for his offerings], who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother [because of jealousy]. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil [he presumed to worship God by offering fruit instead of a sacrificial lamb] and his brother’s [actions] were righteous [because he did as God commanded].”** (1 John 3:12, insertions mine) Even though laws regarding the sacredness of the seventh day will be implemented in Israel, the Jewish dilemma will be the worship of Jesus Christ. The 144,000 will proclaim, “Worship Jesus Christ on His Sabbath Day! Worship the Creator, the One who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything that exists.” (Colossians 1:16) God’s people will not worship the Sabbath. They will worship Jesus Christ on His Sabbath. Remember, the Ten Commandments define how love is to be expressed. There is no commandment to worship the law of God. The first angel’s message will be a demand to worship our Creator who is twice entitled to our love and worship – once through creation and once through redemption.

2. The remnant of the woman will also obey the testimony of Jesus. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:10) Notice how this works: Jesus will speak often during the Great Tribulation. The Holy Spirit will speak the words of Jesus through His prophets. Thus, 144,000 mouthpieces will deliver the words of Jesus in realtime to a listening world and the honest in heart will recognize the voice of Jesus and honor Him by obeying His commands. **“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”** (John 10:27,28) Think about this: People all over the world will actually hear the words (the testimony) of Jesus coming out of the mouths of His prophets. This rare phenomenon has occurred a few times in history and it will happen again during the Great Tribulation.

The Spirit of Prophecy

The angel said to John, **“I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers *who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*”** (Revelation 19:10, italics mine) Even the angels obey the testimony of Jesus! There is a good reason why the testimony of Jesus is called the “spirit of prophecy.” The testimony of Jesus comes through a special *gift*, the gift of prophesy. (1 Corinthians 14:1) During the Great Tribulation, the 144,000 will frequently prophesy. (Revelation 10:7,11) They will expose hidden and secret things. They will have knowledge about matters which will confound their enemies. Remember how the Holy Spirit revealed to Peter that Ananias and Sapphira had lied about the money they received from the sale of their land. (Acts 5) Remember how Jesus knew the thoughts of the Pharisees when He healed the paralytic lying on his mat. (Matthew 9:1-6) Remember how Daniel was enabled to interpret the dream given to Nebuchadnezzar, even though the king could not remember it. (Daniel 2) These are prophetic samples of things to come. The 144,000 will confront the thoughts and hidden sins of their enemies. The 144,000 will perform mighty miracles, and their enemies will be astonished and left speechless! The gift of prophesy is not to be confused with the nonsense that goes on today in many churches. Many people are prophesying out of their own imagination and calling it “a word from the Lord.” God hates this. When people claim to have received “a word from the Lord,” they had better be telling the truth or God will destroy them for blasphemy. (See Ezekiel 13.) When Almighty God has something to say, He speaks and there is a revelation of information that is otherwise unknown.

Prophets of God encounter God as though He were a real person, as one person speaks to another. (Genesis 32:30; Exodus 33:11; Daniel 10:4-14; Revelation 1:10-19; 2 Corinthians 12:1-9)

Carefully consider this verse: **“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”** (Revelation 1:9, italics mine) John was acquainted with suffering for Christ’s sake. He was exiled on the island of Patmos for obeying the Word of God (instead of the laws of men) and for speaking the words which Jesus gave him to speak. As a prophet of God, John spoke the truth regardless of any consequence. This is why he was on Patmos. The Spirit of prophecy is a powerful sword, an inflammatory testimony, and the living word of God. (Hebrews 4:12) When Jesus speaks through His prophets, He speaks with perfect knowledge of any situation. Jesus has divine wisdom and the penetrating power of the Spirit at His disposal. When a prophet speaks the testimony of Jesus, people with rebellious hearts are left defeated, fuming, and speechless! On many occasions Jesus silenced His opposition on Earth with divine wisdom and the ability to read their thoughts. (Luke 9:47) This incredible gift explains why the life span of Israel’s prophets was rather short.

When He was on Earth, Jesus lamented the untimely death of the many prophets that He had sent to Israel. He said, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”** (Matthew 23:37) The 144,000 will deliver the testimony of Jesus without deviation (no weasel words) and this will make their enemies furious! As we learned from our study on the Two Witnesses, the 144,000 will remain faithful. They will speak the truth without regard for the consequences. **“No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.”** (Revelation 14:5) When we see the suffering which the 144,000 will experience for speaking the testimony of Jesus, the words of Revelation 14:5 will become profound.

Synthesis of Revelation 12

Thus far, we have examined each verse in Revelation 12. Even though Prophecy II does not end with verse 17, this is a good place to summarize all that we have learned so far from Revelation 12:

Prophecy I - Revelation 12:1-6

1. John saw a pregnant woman standing on the moon wearing a glorious garment.
2. John saw an enormous red dragon standing before the woman, ready to devour her child the moment He was born.
3. John saw the male child taken to Heaven, to God's throne.
4. John saw the dragon chase the woman to the desert for 1,260 day/years.

Prophecy II - Revelation 12:7-14:5

1. John saw the devil cast out of Heaven on Resurrection Sunday.
2. John saw the devil chase the woman into the desert for a time, times, and half a time.
3. John saw the devil spew a great torrent of water out of his mouth. The metaphor of a flood indicates the devil attempted to sweep her away with waves of persecution.
4. Earth helped the woman. God raised up the United States in 1776. This nation enabled Protestants to translate and distribute the Bible and the gospel of Jesus throughout the world.
5. When the devil saw the authority of the Catholic Church broken (1798), he began preparing for a final assault on the remnant of the woman. He is armed and ready.
6. The woman will be easily identified during the Great Tribulation: God's saints will obey all twelve commandments and the testimony of Jesus, which will be spoken through the 144,000.

We Are Living between Revelation 12:17 and 13:1

Consider these two verses and our position between them: **“Then [after 1,260 years of trying to destroy the woman in the desert] the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off [that is, he gave up his efforts against the woman in the desert so that he could prepare] to make war against the rest [the last or remnant] of her offspring – those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea [waiting for the first four trumpets to sound. When the wrath of God is released on Earth, the whole world will suddenly become afraid**

of God. When the world attempts to appease His awful wrath, it will create a church/state monster]. **And I saw a [leopard-like] beast coming out of the sea. He [the leopard-like beast, also called Babylon] had ten horns [representing ten future kings] and seven heads [representing the seven religious systems of the world], with ten crowns [of authority] on his horns, and on each head [was written] a blasphemous name [that is, each head insults God]."** (Revelation 12:17,13:1, insertions mine)

The Rise of Babylon

In the chapter about the Seven Trumpets, we examined the global crisis that will cause Babylon to form. An overwhelming fear of God's wrath during the first four trumpets will bring world leaders together in ways that are unimaginable now. Earlier in this chapter, we also examined the rise of Babylon and the identity of the seven heads and we learned that they represent the seven religious systems of the world. Before we further investigate the sudden rise of the leopard-like beast, a recent event has occurred that illustrates how quickly Babylon could rise from a multitude of nations.

As I am writing this chapter, the world is experiencing a sudden financial crisis. Consider this abbreviated report written by CNN correspondent, Kathleen Koch, on October 18, 2008:

WASHINGTON (CNN) — President Bush announced Saturday that he will host the first of what could be several summits of world leaders to discuss the global response to the financial crisis. President Bush and French President Nicolas Sarkozy discussed the summit Saturday in Maryland. "It is essential that *we work together* because *we're in this crisis together*," Bush said at Camp David, Maryland, with French President Nicolas Sarkozy and European Union President Jose Manuel Barroso. "*Together we will work* to modernize our financial systems," Bush said. "We must resist the temptation of financial isolationism. . . ." (Italics mine)

If world leaders can quickly come together to repair a broken economy, what will they do when God's wrath breaks out against the whole world? What will world leaders do when our infrastructures are destroyed and 1.75 billion people die because of God's wrath? Desperate circumstances require extreme solutions and this explains how the rise of Babylon will be "astonishing." The whole world will think, at first, that Babylon's rise and efforts to appease God are

appropriate, but global approval will soon fade. With these thoughts in mind, please consider Revelation 13:2-8:

“The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon [Lucifer] gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority [over the world]. One of the heads of the beast [Catholicism] seemed to have had a fatal wound [February 1798], but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished [and overwhelmed at God’s wrath] and [they innocently] followed [the demands of] the beast.” (Revelation 13:2,3, insertions mine) I believe the healing of the fatal wound means the Catholic Church will be elected as the leader of Babylon to facilitate the attempted recovery.

“Men worshiped the dragon [that is, they unknowingly obeyed Lucifer] because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast [they obeyed the laws of Babylon] and asked, ‘Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?’ [Who can resist this global endeavor for appeasing God’s wrath?] The [leopard-like] beast was given a mouth [by the devil] to utter proud words and blasphemies [defying and insulting God’s demands] and to exercise his authority for forty-two months.” (Revelation 13:4,5, insertions mine) The leopard-like beast has no authority over the world other than these forty-two months.

“He [the leopard-like beast] opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his [holy] name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.” (Revelation 13:6, insertions mine) This phrase means Babylon will declare the Ten Commandments null and void. Babylon will arrogantly claim that it has highest authority in all religious matters and opposition will not be tolerated.

“He [the leopard-like beast, a hand puppet of the devil] 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, italics and insertions mine) This includes the “great” nations of China, India, Russia, and the United States of America.

“All inhabitants of the earth will worship [obey] the [leopard-like] beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.” (Revelation 13:8, insertions mine)

Millions of Sleeping Christians Are about to be Ambushed

Look at Revelation 12:17: **“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring”** This war is described seven verses later: **“He 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) Lucifer will persecute the saints for forty-two months. The chronological flow from Revelation 12:17 into Revelation 13:1-8 is very clear, but millions of Christians totally ignore this linkage. Religion is so blinding. Christians who believe in a pre-tribulation rapture think they will be in Heaven, even though the Bible clearly says the dragon will make war against the “remnant of the woman.” On the other hand, people who believe the leopard-like beast and the forty-two months of persecution took place during the Dark Ages are just as misguided. Regardless of which position you take, the devil is armed and ready to make war on God’s people, and hundreds of millions of Christians are asleep. They do not have a clue that they are about to be ambushed.

To put this coming ambush in perspective, let us review four items that were examined in the chapter on the Seven Trumpets:

1. The first four trumpet judgments described in Revelation 8:2-13 will produce death and destruction on a biblical scale that exceeds human measurement and calculation. These judgments will occur during the first thirty to sixty days of the Great Tribulation. Because these judgments will be global, most survivors will seriously question whether survival on planet Earth will continue. These judgments will destroy thousands of cities. Earth’s infrastructures will be in ruins and twenty-five percent of Earth’s seven billion people (1.75 billion people) will die.
2. During the first four trumpets, the inhabitants of Earth will be traumatized by two painful observations: First, they will tremble at the reality of Almighty God and the power and scope of His wrath. Second, they will observe that God’s wrath fell on cities and places that were well known for their wickedness. Since very few people understand the book of Revelation now, most survivors will logically think that more judgments from God are imminently forthcoming. This anticipation will induce urgency, and this urgency will move the leaders of the world to rapidly and radically transform the world’s governance. Desperate situations require extreme solutions. During the fourth trumpet, darkness will cover the middle third of

our planet and during this darkness, world leaders will quickly agree on the formation of a crisis government whose mission will be to reduce sinful behavior and appease God's wrath. This crisis government is Babylon, the leopard-like beast of Revelation 13.

3. The need for a crisis government will be compelling. Everyone will be afraid of God and no one will argue against appeasing God's anger. Almost everyone will assume that more destruction is forthcoming unless something is done quickly! The religious and political justification to form Babylon will be simple: "Mankind must immediately appease God through repentance and worship or all mankind will perish." This justification and the mayhem of the moment will require martial law. Constitutions will be set aside and religious freedom will become a memory.
4. Jesus will turn the world upside down with the first four trumpet judgments. He will put the religious leaders of the world in positions of power. God's greatest frustration is not with political leaders, but with religious leaders who claim to know Him. Religious leaders will be given positions of higher authority than political leaders because religious leaders will claim (and billions of people will believe) that they know the will and ways of Almighty God! (Of course, their actions will prove otherwise, but their ignorance will take a few months to unfold.) This "fruit basket upset" will enable religious leaders to get what they want. They will insist on the creation of many "sin-less" laws and bewildered politicians will have no choice but to enact and enforce them. As political leaders survey the extent of death and global destruction caused by the first four trumpets, they, too, will realize that God targeted places that were well known for wickedness. This fact will motivate them to do whatever the religious leaders think best. Sinful behaviors of all kinds will be declared "illegal." Morality will be legislated and offenders will be severely punished – all this to avert more of God's wrath.

Babylon Gets Organized

In a vacuum of darkness, fear, foreboding, and global uncertainty, I anticipate the Roman Catholic Church will step forward with leadership. The pope will invite religious and political leaders from all over the world to a worldwide summit. At a minimum, three amazing decisions will come from this summit that would otherwise be unthinkable. Here is a sample:

1. The council will agree that (a) God is angry because the world's behavior is degenerate and decadent, and (b) all nations must unite as one family, improve their behavior, and appease Almighty God. Amazingly, everyone will see the problem and agree on the solution. In concrete terms, the solution will consist of legislation producing repentance, reformation, and worship.
2. Everyone at the council will realize that God's anger was directed at notably wicked places. Therefore, the political leaders of the world will agree to submit to the directives of Babylon because God's wrath could break out against any nation or even the whole world again.
3. The leaders of the world will create an executive committee of religious leaders from the seven religions of the world. (This committee will be something like the Security Council in the United Nations, except it will be religious in nature and far more dictatorial.) The pope will be selected as the leader of this council for several reasons. First, his selection will be the moment the deadly wound is completely healed. Second, the Roman Catholic Church is uniquely prepared to lead Babylon because it is both a spiritual and a political organization having diplomatic relations with more than 170 nations on Earth. Keep in mind the pope will not be elected for the purpose of promoting or imposing Catholic doctrine on the nations of Earth. The diversity of the world's religions will not permit this. Rather, the mandate the pope and his council will have is to oversee and direct a global effort to appease God.

Actually, for all the good the leopard-like beast intends to do, it will quickly become a hand-puppet of the devil. **“The dragon [the devil] gave the [leopard-like] beast his power and his throne and great authority.”** (Revelation 13:2, insertion mine) Babylon will be a “human glove” which mankind will create to appease God, but the devil will use it to persecute the woman. Consider this illustration: If you put your hand into a glove and then you hit someone with your gloved hand, who or what is responsible for the pain you caused, the glove or your hand? When the world exalts the rule of religion over politics and creates Babylon, the devil will quickly enter through the back door to take control of the world.

The devil is waiting for Babylon to be formed because he has been preparing to make war on the saints for a long time. (Revelation 12:17) Soon, his chance to destroy them will come. Jesus closes this portion of the story by saying, **“He who has an ear, let him hear [what the**

Spirit says]. **If anyone is to go into captivity** [for his faith in Me], **into captivity he will go** [don't worry because I will give you strength to endure]. **If anyone is to be killed with the sword** [because of his faith in Me], **with the sword he will be killed** [but, don't worry because I will set you free from your fear]. **This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.**" (Revelation 13:9,10)

The King of Modern Babylon Appears

We have already seen that the enormous red dragon is Lucifer and the lamb-like beast is Lucifer in human form. Lucifer, the coming Antichrist, will not be a mere man. He is an extraterrestrial being who has been alive for thousands of years. Lucifer's miracles will dwarf anything that human beings can do. We know from Revelation 9:16 that 200 million angels will accompany the devil – John heard the number! We know from Revelation 9:11, Daniel 8:19, 23, Revelation 17:11, and 2 Thessalonians 2:6, that the devil is an evil king who will be released from the invisible realm at the appointed time. We have learned from Revelation 13:2 that Lucifer will be the power within Babylon. We also know that Lucifer's main objective will be the destruction of the remnant of the woman. (Revelation 12:17, 13:7) Several specifications are presented in Revelation 13:11-18 on the lamb-like beast. Please consider these seven:

1. He has two horns. (These horns represent his authority over church and state)
2. He will speak. (He will declare law.)
3. He will perform great miracles and signs, even causing fire to fall from Heaven. (He will "prove" his assumed divinity.)
4. He will deceive the world with his miracles.
5. He will eventually demand that an image of Babylon be set up. (The image will be a theocracy, a one-world church-state.)
6. He will demand death for anyone refusing to worship the image.
7. He will impose his mark on the right hand or the forehead of all people so that no one can buy or sell unless they wear his tattoo.

The only being who can rise from out of the Abyss (that is, having no political or military support) and meet all these conditions during the last 445 days of the Great Tribulation is Lucifer.

“Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men.” (Revelation 13:11-13)

Comment: John’s use of language confuses a lot of people. Consider this sentence: **“He [Lucifer] exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf** [that is, Lucifer, masquerading as God, commends the leaders of Babylon for their efforts to appease God with “sin-less” laws. He will tell the world that the leaders of Babylon have acted appropriately], **and [Lucifer] made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast** [obey the “sin-less” laws of Babylon], **whose [sixth head had received a] fatal wound [but] had been healed.”** When Lucifer first appears, he will flatter the leaders of Babylon with much praise. Masquerading as Almighty God, he will want them to think that he is very pleased with their harsh laws and the persecution they have imposed on God’s saints – ostensibly to reduce immoral behavior. To further gain their confidence, the devil will demand that everyone obey the laws of Babylon. Religious leaders will be very pleased.

The Image of the Beast

“Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 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.” (Revelation 13:14,15)

Comment: Jesus will release Lucifer and his angels from the Abyss at the fifth trumpet and He will permit Lucifer to use miracle working powers so that people will believe his lies. Jesus will send this powerful delusion because the world will have rejected truth. **“. . . They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”** (2 Thessalonians 2:10, italics mine) Lucifer and his angels will descend from the sky in various places and he will speak favorably of Babylon’s leaders and of their efforts to reduce rebellious and sinful behavior. The devil will want the world to believe that Babylon’s leaders have been on the right track. The devil will use this tactic for two reasons.

First, through flattery and miracles, he will want the leaders of Babylon to believe that he really is Almighty God and in turn, their endorsement will convince their respective followers to believe the same. This age-old game is called “Follow the experts, believe your religious leaders.” Second, Lucifer will want the whole world to quickly conclude that he truly is Almighty God. Once the devil has convinced a majority of the world that he really is God, the devil will suddenly betray Babylon’s leaders before the sixth trumpet. He will change course by abolishing the religions of the world. He will appoint ten kings. He will do this for several nasty reasons, but this is the argument he will use: There is one God, one faith, and one baptism.

Here is a scenario to consider: Lucifer will announce to the world that Babylon needs improvement because there is no place for religious diversity when God lives among men. Therefore, Babylon has to be transformed so that Babylon’s highest and purest purpose can be achieved, namely, the establishment of a global church-state. Lucifer will demand the formation of a theocracy – a government where he rules over church and state. John calls Lucifer’s theocracy the “image of the first beast” in Revelation 13:15 and the “great whore” in Revelation 17:1-4.

Lucifer’s theocracy is called the “image of the first beast” because it will be a replica, an updated and improved version of Babylon which was also a global church-state – albeit a conflicted one. Remember, the leopard-like beast is a composite beast that represents an amalgamation of seven opposing religions (the seven heads) under the leadership of the pope. In contrast, Lucifer’s theocracy will not suffer from religious diversity. People will not be allowed to have diverse views about God because “God” reigns on Earth! Internal opposition and diverse views will not be tolerated because there will be one lord of lords and one king of kings. Do not forget, the devil will have miracle working powers to back up his blasphemous claims. This will be a very impressive delusion!

Lucifer’s “image to the beast” is also called “the great whore” in Revelation 17 because the wicked who participate in his theocracy will have to (a) abandon their religion – the very thing they refused to abandon in order to embrace the gospel of Christ, and (b) violate their consciences in order to survive, that is, to buy and sell. Millions of people, including people who claim to be Christians, will join a demonic organization to avoid obeying Jesus Christ. How ironic! Moreover, Lucifer will dissolve the imaginary boundaries that currently separate

nations and cultures. He will divide Earth into ten geographical sectors and his ten kings will see that no rebellion exists throughout his great empire of Babylon. Everyone refusing to obey Lucifer's laws will be put to death. (Revelation 13:15) Indeed, the Bible reveals that a third of mankind will die. (Revelation 9:15)

The Mark of the Beast

“He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark [The Greek word for “mark” is *charagma*. It means an etching or an engraving, a tattoo] 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 and insertions mine)

Comment: The Bible says the mark of the beast will consist of two different *etchings* (or tattoos). One etching is the *name* of the lamb-like beast and the other, the *number* of his name. The first tattoo will be engraved on the foreheads of Lucifer's lieutenants. This etching will be a show of rank. This tattoo will be the name that Lucifer uses after he is released from the Abyss. (Lucifer's assumed name is unknown at this time. Incidentally, Jesus will assume a new name at the Second Coming which is also unknown at this time. Revelation 19:12) The second tattoo will be the number of the lamb-like beast's name, which is the number, 666. This tattoo will be etched on the right hand of everyone who swears allegiance to “Almighty God” (Lucifer).

For 2,000 years, Bible students have tried to determine the identity of the Antichrist by mathematically translating various names into the number 666. For example, early Christians translated the names of different caesars using Roman numerals. (Remember, the Roman caesars severely persecuted the Christians, and therefore, they reasoned that one caesar might be the “Antichrist.”) The process of translation is simple. Each letter in a name is translated into a Roman numeral. The numerals are added together, and any name whose sum is 666 could be the dreaded Antichrist! (The problem with this process is that there are several specifications in Revelation 13:11-18 that must be fulfilled before the identity of the Antichrist can be accurately determined.) During the Dark Ages, Protestants used the Roman numeral technique on various names and titles of popes. After the fatal wound was inflicted in 1798, Protestants began looking at other names, but I believe these endeavors were totally misguided. Here is why:

Before the number 666 can be calculated, the identity of the beast has to be determined. At this point in our study, we know that the *beast* who rises out of the bottomless pit in Revelation 13:11 is Lucifer in human form! The devil himself is the Antichrist. He was the first angel to take a position against Jesus before the world was created and he will be the last angel to die when the world is cleansed by fire. When Lucifer appears at the fifth trumpet, he will have power and miracle working abilities that dwarfs human beings. He will descend from the sky with 200 million angels, and as needed, he will call down fire from Heaven to prove his assumed divinity. The Bible says he will deceive the inhabitants of Earth. The mark of the *devil*, literally, “the *etching* of Lucifer,” will be a tattoo on the right hand or the forehead!

Four Prerequisites Are Necessary

A proper understanding of the mark of the beast requires four prerequisites. First, to understand that at the sixth trumpet, three groups of people will live on Earth. Second, to understand the meaning of the fifth and sixth trumpets. Third, to understand God’s use of “thirds,” and fourth, to understand the identity of the lamb-like beast. With these four elements in mind, let us briefly consider these four prerequisites. The first prerequisite is understanding that three groups of people will live on Earth when the mark of the beast is implemented. They are:

1. The saints: These people have surrendered to the gospel of Jesus and have been sealed.
2. The religious wicked: These people have a form of godliness, but have refused the gospel of Jesus, and rather than living by faith, they have submitted to Babylon’s authority.
3. The non-religious wicked: These people have refused the gospel of Jesus and the authority of Babylon. They want nothing to do with religion.

The Second Prerequisite

The second prerequisite for understanding the mark of the beast is an understanding of the fifth and sixth trumpets. Since we have examined the seven trumpets in an earlier chapter, two short summary statements about them should suffice:

1. The fifth trumpet occurs when two-thirds of the time allotted for the Great Tribulation ends. At this point in time, the advancement of

the gospel of Jesus will come to a standstill. Almost everyone will have taken a position for or against the gospel of Jesus. Jesus releases Lucifer from the Abyss to apply pressure on the wicked. The devil will force people into making their final decision. The devil's demons will inflict searing pain on those who refuse to confess that the devil is God. (**Note:** The devil's angels are not allowed to harm those who have the seal of God during the fifth trumpet. Jesus hopes the non-religious wicked will notice this protection and turn from their rebellion and embrace His gospel.)

2. The sixth trumpet will be a great war lasting approximately seven months and the death toll will be 1.75 billion people (currently a third of mankind). Lucifer will initiate this war when he establishes his theocracy and rules over Earth as Almighty God. The devil will purge his kingdom of "unbelievers." Millions of saints and most, if not all, of the 144,000 will die during this purge. Hundreds of millions of non-religious wicked will also perish because Lucifer's ultimate purpose for the purge will be to eliminate opposition. He intends to rule as lord of lords and king of kings, and no one will be able to resist him.

The Third Prerequisite

The third prerequisite for understanding the mark of the beast involves God's use of thirds. This is a critical matter. In ancient times, when total destruction was justified, a generous king might spare a third of his enemies if he thought there was redemptive value. Please consider the following examples:

1. **"David also defeated the Moabites. He made them lie down on the ground and measured them off with a length of cord. Every two lengths of them were put to death, and *the third length* was allowed to live. So the Moabites became subject to David and brought tribute.** (2 Samuel 8:2, italics mine) David generously spared one-third of the Moabites because he knew the survivors would gladly pay their taxes, and as their nation grew, so would the tax revenue. David spared a third because he saw redemptive value.
2. **"Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I myself will withdraw my favor; I will not look on you with pity or spare you. A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside**

you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword.” (Ezekiel 5:11,12) God destroyed two-thirds of Israel and spared a third of His people from Nebuchadnezzar because He saw redemptive value!

3. **“In the whole land,’ declares the Lord, ‘two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The Lord is our God.’”** (Zechariah 13:8,9) Again, God destroyed two-thirds and spared one-third because He saw redemptive value!
4. **“His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.”** (Revelation 12:4) This text refers to God’s patience with Lucifer. God cast Lucifer out of Heaven when his deception corrupted one-third of Heaven’s angels. God spared two-thirds of the angels, but cast out a third.
5. **“... A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. ... A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. ... A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.”** (Revelation 8:7-9,11) There are twelve instances in Revelation mentioning one-third being destroyed and two-thirds being spared during the seven trumpets. Did you notice that instead of destroying two-thirds, one-third is destroyed? The destruction of one-third proves two things. First, Jesus is a double generous King! Jesus would be justified if He destroyed two-thirds. Second, Jesus is on a mission to save souls even as God’s wrath is being poured out. He sees a great deal of redemptive value in mankind and He spares two-thirds so that He might save as many people as possible.
6. **“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.”** (Revelation 9:15) Jesus will permit Lucifer to kill a third of mankind when he sets up his theocracy. Jesus will not let the devil go one step further. Lucifer will be permitted to

purge his kingdom of his opposition. Of course, he will not kill *all* of the saints, but he will kill a definite number. (Revelation 6:9-11)

Synthesis: We have seen in these six passages that God's use of one-third and two-thirds is not random. *God is deliberate and purposeful in everything He does.* The number 666 is not a random number. In fact, 666 is precisely two-thirds of 999. Consider this: When the sixth trumpet occurs, I believe Lucifer will divide the people of Earth into groups of 1,000 for purposes of logistics, rations, and administrative control. This is a common technique used for crowd control in a crisis. Moreover, there is a biblical precedent for dividing people into groups of 1,000. Moses divided the Israelites into groups of 1,000 while in the wilderness: **“Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves.”** (Exodus 18:24-26)

There are several references in the Bible showing that people were commonly grouped into units of 1,000. (See Numbers 31:48-54, Deuteronomy 1:15, 1 Samuel 22:7, and 1 Chronicles 27:1.) If this arrangement worked well in ancient times, it will work very well during the primitive circumstances of the Great Tribulation. There will be no computers, telephones, or electronic devices with which to manage the needs of people because electricity will not exist. The first four trumpets will have destroyed the world's infrastructure. Dividing people into small groups of 1,000 has proven to be a simple and effective way to manage people throughout history and it will prove to be an effective tool when Lucifer establishes his theocracy.

The Fourth Prerequisite

We know at this point in our study that the lamb-like beast is Lucifer in human form. This fact is crucial because **the beast** who owns the mark is Lucifer. Remember, the Greek word for “mark” is *charagma* and it means an “etching” or “engraving.” Lucifer will require a *charagma* on the right hand of every wicked person and this *charagma* must be visibly shown in order to buy and sell. This etching will be non-removable, non-transferrable, and non-losable. It will be a tattoo on the right hand. (**Note:** A tattoo is a *charagma*. A story that runs parallel to the mark of the beast is told in Ezekiel 9. Although this story did not actually take place, the concept of separating people according to a mark (etching) was presented to Ezekiel in a vision.)

Consider this possible scenario: When Lucifer abolishes the religious systems of the world, he will set up ten kings. These kings will do whatever the devil wants. (Revelation 17:13) The devil will divide the people of Earth into groups of 1,000 and one person from each group of 1,000 will be chosen as the leader. He will report to his respective king. This will leave 999 people in each group. The devil will tell the world that 666 people in each group will be permitted to live and participate in his theocracy. Therefore, if a person wishes to avoid death, he must come forward by a predetermined date, swear allegiance and loyalty to the devil and his government, and receive a tattoo on his right hand showing the number 666. Only the first 666 people of each group of 1,000 who come forward and voluntarily receive the mark will be spared. This tattoo will separate Lucifer's opposition from those willing to serve as devoted subjects. Most people will consider this the good news (if there is any in this), because it means that two-thirds of each group will be spared! This decree will force the wicked to make their final decision. Many will rush to receive the tattoo because they know that each group will be limited to 666 survivors. This process explains why Lucifer's theocracy is called "the great whore" in Revelation 17. People will knowingly and willfully worship the devil to survive, and in doing so, will sell their soul to the devil.

People who refuse the mark of the beast will become targets for murder. Millions of saints will be slaughtered. (Revelation 6:9-11; 16:6; 17:6) Most, if not all, of the 144,000 will perish. Millions in the non-religious group will also be killed, and if necessary, even those who would worship the devil will be killed. The devil is a sociopath. He loves no one. Only 666 people will be allowed to live, the rest will be killed as quickly as they can be found. Jesus said, **"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"** (Matthew 16:25,26)

The tattoo on the forehead is easy to understand. It is a simple counterfeit. The Bible says the names of Jesus and the Father will be *engraved* on the foreheads of the 144,000! (See Revelation 14:1, 22:4) This glorious insignia on their foreheads will indicate their high rank wherever they travel throughout eternity. Lucifer will counterfeit this insignia by putting his name, in the form of an engraving (a tattoo), on the forehead of his lieutenant in each group.

Lucifer's assumed name (unknown at this time) will not be numerically equivalent to 666. The Bible does not indicate or require a Roman

numeral translation. Rather, the Bible indicates that the number 666 is the “number [of people] *belonging* to the man [of sin].” The Greek syntax puts this phrase in a genitive of *possession* case, that is, 666 people will belong to Lucifer. Look again at these verses: “**He** [the lamb-like beast] **also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark** [Greek: *charagma* – an etching, an engraving, a tattoo] **on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the** [visible tattoo] **mark** [to show everyone], **which is the** [assumed] **name of the beast** [tattooed on the forehead] **or the number** [of people who belong to] **of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate** [count] **the number of** [people belonging to] **the beast, for it is** [the] **man’s number** [that is, the number belonging to the man of sin]. **His number** [of remaining people] **is 666.**” (Revelation 13:16-18, italics and insertions mine)

Three Interesting Points

As we close this section, three interesting points should be noticed:

1. The number of people killed by the first four trumpets is twenty-five percent. When the fourth seal is opened, a fourth of Earth’s population will be killed. (Revelation 6:8) This means 1.75 billion people will die (assuming there is a global population of seven billion people when the Great Tribulation begins). The number killed by Lucifer’s forces will be the same! Look at the math:

Fourth Seal	Sixth Trumpet
7.00 billion population	5.25 billion population
<u>- 1.75 billion - 25% killed</u>	<u>- 1.75 billion - (33%) killed</u>
5.25 billion survivors	3.50 billion survivors

It is interesting to notice that Jesus and Lucifer kill the same number of people and together, they reduce the population of Earth by fifty percent during the Great Tribulation. It is ironic that Jesus justifiably kills twenty-five percent of the people who live on Earth in an effort to save as many survivors as possible, whereas Lucifer kills thirty-three percent of the world’s population in order to rule over Earth.

2. When the sixth trumpet war is over, the devil will rule the world. The seven religions of the world will be abolished and ten kings will serve the devil as taskmasters. The Antichrist will establish a one-

world religion and a one-world government, and no ordinary man could possibly accomplish this!

3. The Bible predicts slavery will be implemented during the Great Tribulation. Consider these three texts (*italics mine*):
 - a. **“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.”** (Revelation 6:15)
 - b. **“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.”** (Revelation 13:16)
 - c. **“And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, ‘Come, gather together for the great supper of God so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and *slave*, small and great.’ ”** (Revelation 19:17,18)

Indentured slavery will be practiced during the Great Tribulation. People will either (a) fall into slavery because they cannot pay their bills, or (b) sell themselves into slavery in order to survive. This practice is as old as mankind. In fact, this is how the children of Israel became enslaved to Pharaoh. (See Genesis 41 and 42.) The devil will convince the world that he has come to establish 1,000 years of peace on Earth, and Earth must be rebuilt and repaired. People will have to work for food. Of course, the devil knows there will be no recovery from the destruction of the first four trumpets and he also knows there will not be 1,000 years of peace. (The 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20 occur in Heaven after the Second Coming.) These are lies which he will use to overwork the people of Earth until the seven bowls bring the devil’s rule to a grinding halt.

God’s Sabbath Rest

As the Great Tribulation unfolds, resting and refraining from work on God’s holy day will become increasingly impossible without suffering a harsh or deadly penalty. Thus, conflict over God’s holy day will boil down to a question of survival, just as it did at the Exodus. Before ancient Israel could leave Egypt, God commanded that they rest on His holy day. Resting on the Sabbath made Pharaoh furious, and his

punishment was so harsh that Israel's foremen were willing to abandon the Sabbath and remain in Egyptian slavery. **“The Israelite foremen realized they were in trouble when they were told, ‘You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day.’ When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, and they said, ‘May the Lord look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.’”** (Exodus 5:19-21)

This scenario will be repeated. Before spiritual Israel can exit this world of slavery to sin, we are going to be tested to see if we will rest from work on God's holy day. Those who worship God will obey His laws. Those who worship Lucifer will obey his laws. When the laws of two kingdoms are in direct conflict, the allegiance of every citizen will be revealed. Those serving the devil will submit to his authority and receive his tattoo. Those serving Jesus will not be able to buy or sell. Millions will perish, but the saints will live by faith. **“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 1:17) **“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.”** (1 John 5:4)

Homecoming for the 144,000

We have come to the last segment in this lengthy prophecy. Just in case you have forgotten, we are still studying Prophecy II, Revelation 12:7-14:5. Since we examined Revelation 14:1-5 and the 144,000 in a chapter dedicated to them, a few closing words about the 144,000 are needed.

For good reason, the end of this prophecy recognizes the incredible service and victory of the 144,000 over Babylon and Lucifer. Even though most, if not all, of the 144,000 will be killed, they will accomplish everything that Jesus wants them to do. They will faithfully say everything Jesus wants them to say and they will go wherever Jesus sends them – not only during the Great Tribulation, but throughout eternity! Whenever I meditate on the work and ministry of the 144,000, I am always fascinated with their worthlessness and yet, their exceeding great value – worthless in the eyes of the wicked, but having the highest value in the eyes of our Creator.

Taken to Heaven

Consider the glorious scene that takes place on the 1,265th day of the Great Tribulation. On that Sunday morning, Jesus will resurrect the 144,000 and take them to Heaven, and the wicked of Earth will witness this phenomenon. Notice how these two passages parallel each other:

“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. And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they 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 14:1-3, italics mine)

“And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those [the 144,000] who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. 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, insertion mine)

The 144,000 will sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, and no one else can learn their song because no one but Moses, Jesus, and the 144,000 have endured such horrible experiences!

“These [the 144,000] are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes [because they belong to Him]. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.” (Revelation 14:4,5, insertion mine)

Jesus selected and sealed these ordinary people first and He will take them to Heaven first because they are samples of the harvest that will come from every nation, kindred, tribe, and people. They faithfully spoke the testimony of Jesus – without regard for their life.

Summary

Prophecy I and Prophecy II are inspiring because they tell us that Lucifer will ultimately fail. This may not sound very important right now, but it will be very encouraging in days to come. There will be an end to Lucifer's torment. **“Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.”** (Daniel 12:12) We have read about Lucifer's failures in this study because Jesus wants us to know that evil may prosper for a season, but it will not endure.

Once again, review his failures:

1. Lucifer tried to kill Jesus at birth.
2. Lucifer tried to ruin the plan of salvation by tempting Jesus (at His weakest moment) to worship him.
3. Lucifer tried to keep Jesus in the tomb by sealing it with a huge stone.
4. Lucifer tried to prevent Jesus from taking his position in Heaven's government.
5. Lucifer tried to keep the truth about Christ's resurrection a secret.
6. Lucifer persecuted the woman for 1,260 years, but he could not destroy her.
7. Lucifer will make war on the remnant of the woman for forty-two months, but he cannot destroy her. He will kill most, if not all, of the 144,000, but Jesus resurrects them.

(**Note:** To make this story complete, I must mention Lucifer's next two failures.)

8. Lucifer will lead the world into war against Jesus as He appears in the clouds, but he will be soundly defeated and returned to the Abyss for 1,000 years.
9. At the end of the 1,000 years, Lucifer will lead the wicked against the Holy City, but God will strike Earth with blazing fire from Heaven, and the wicked, including Lucifer and his demons, will be annihilated.

An Invitation to Join the Winning Team!

Anyone who reads this book can join the winning team right now, this very minute, by giving your life to Jesus Christ. Here is the process:

First, tell the Lord Jesus you realize that you are a sinner and that you cannot save yourself from the penalty of sin. Then, tell the Lord “thank you” for dying on the cross in your place. Tell Him that you accept His offer: A life for a life. You are giving Him your sinful life and you believe that He will give you His perfect life which brings the assurance of eternal life to you. Tell Him that you love Him for what He has done for you and that you are willing to do whatever He commands. Tell Him you are willing to become all that He wants you to be. Ask Him to show you where He wants you to go so that you may best serve His interests today. Tell Him that you want to bring honor to His holy name through humble behavior, and Jesus will warmly embrace you through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It does not matter how messed up your present situation may be or how disgusting your past might have been. He will joyfully become your God and you will become His child.

Because we have the privilege of owning a Bible, we have the opportunity to see into the future. We know who the winners and the losers are going to be during the Great Tribulation. Many of the winners will be tortured and killed, but Jesus will not reward the winners until the dead in Christ are resurrected! Jesus does not see the first death as the end of life. **“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and [the grave] Hades.”** (Revelation 1:17,18, insertion mine) If Jesus was willing to give up His eternal life in order to save us from eternal death, surely we can give up our temporal lives (prompted by our love for Christ and the indwelling strength of the Holy Spirit) as a testimony of our love for Him. In fact, the most telling evidence of a born-again Christian is this:

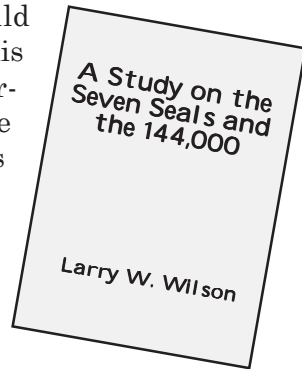
“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34) The angel said, **“They overcame him [Lucifer] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”** (Revelation 12:11)

Books

Read the companion volume to *A Study on the Seven Trumpets, Two Witnesses, and Four Beasts . . .*

A Study on the Seven Seals and the 144,000

Every Bible prophecy student should consider the introductory chapter of this book. Why do we have so many interpretations of prophecy? Because the importance of valid rules or methods of interpretation are often overlooked. This book demonstrates how valid rules of interpretation allow the Bible to speak for itself.



Bible Stories with End Time Parallels



This book is a compilation of ten articles written in 2002. This book is a “real faith builder.” Even though the Bible stories are familiar, they “snap” with new perspective, highlighting significant end time parallels for Earth’s final generation.

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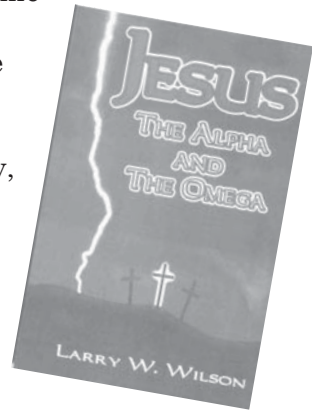
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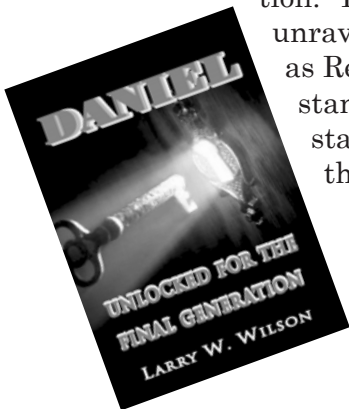
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- The Seven Churches
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- The Two Witnesses
- The Seven Trumpets
- The Four Beasts of Revelation (includes Mark of the Beast)
- The 3 Angel's Messages
- 7 Last Plagues
- Revelation 17-21

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Charts and Brochures

The Jubilee Calendar - God's Template and the Grand Week

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Great Clocks from God

This comprehensive study looks at various methods God uses for the measurement of time, including the Jubilee Calendar. Evidence seems to indicate that when all prophetic time periods are synthesized together, Bible students can understand God's plan for Earth. This research paper, by Larry Wilson, is also available on WUAS' web site [www.wake-up.org] including helpful audio explanations of the charts. Information also available on three DVDs.

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About the Author

Larry Wilson, Director of Wake Up America Seminars, became a born again Christian after returning from a tour of duty in Vietnam. His understanding of the gospel, the plan of salvation, and the atonement of Jesus Christ has thrilled his soul ever since. He has spent more than thirty-five 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 sixty 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.

About the Organization

Wake Up America Seminars (WUAS) is both a non-profit and a non-denominational organization. With God's blessings and the generosity of many people, WUAS has distributed millions of pamphlets, books and tapes around the world since it began in 1988. WUAS is not a church, nor is it affiliated or sponsored by any religious organization. WUAS does not offer membership of any kind. Its mission is not to convert the world to a point of view. Although WUAS has well defined views on certain biblical matters, its mission is primarily "seed sowing." It promotes the primacy of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, His imminent return, and is doing its best to encourage people with the good news of the gospel. People of all faiths are invited to study the materials produced by WUAS.