



# NO MORE DELAY

The Second Coming is Overdue

Larry W. Wilson

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MORE  
Delay**

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**Wake Up America Seminars, Inc.  
P.O. Box 273, Bellbrook, Ohio 45305  
(800) 475-0876**

**ISBN 978-0-9668099-7-8**

First edition, June 2018

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# The Second Coming is Overdue!

- World War III is inevitable and this war will be unlike all previous wars. There will be a sequence of nuclear exchanges and millions of innocent people will be wiped out in a single day! A world-wide panic will follow. People will be crying for “peace and safety.” Nuclear bombs can turn a huge metropolitan city into no-man’s land within minutes. Worse, many who survive the bombs will die later from nuclear consequences. Nuclear war requires a simple mind-set: Annihilate the enemy or be annihilated.
- Bible prophecy indicates Jesus will suddenly bring World War III to an end with a display of divine wrath that dwarfs the destructive capabilities of mankind. Revelation 8 indicates God’s wrath will include a global earthquake that will ruin the infrastructures of Earth, followed by a fiery hailstorm which will burn one-third of Earth, and then a large asteroid will impact an ocean. The resulting tsunami will destroy thousands of coastal cities. After these global disasters, a second asteroid will impact a wicked continent and underground aquifers will become contaminated. Millions of people will die from drinking poisoned water. Finally, there will come a devastating chain of volcano eruptions. Soot and ash will fill the atmosphere and darkness will cover the middle third of Earth (the breadbasket of our planet). Global famine and great tribulation will begin.

- As terrible as World War III will be, the coming wrath of God is exponentially worse. While we are waiting for the onset of the next World War and the arrival of God's overwhelming wrath, now is a good time to become acquainted with God's plans for Earth (foretold in the books of Daniel and Revelation). Soon, the four angels stationed at the four corners of Earth (Revelation 7) will be permitted to sound their trumpets and the devastation of Earth foretold in Revelation 8 will occur. The angels are ready to harm Earth. They are waiting for Jesus to say: **"There will be no more delay!"** (Revelation 10:6)

# Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to all who are eager for Jesus to appear in clouds of glory. Bible prophecy declares that Jesus will soon return to Earth as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:11-16) To some He will say, **“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.”** (Matthew 25:34) and to the rest He will say, **“I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!”** (Matthew 7:23)

This book has been made possible through the sacrificial generosity of donors who understand and love a unique gospel that includes several startling revelations about Jesus Christ. The Bible indicates the fullness and sovereign deity of Jesus Christ will be revealed throughout the whole world during the Great Tribulation. These revelations will be so powerful and convincing that they will overcome many cultural and religious paradigms. Even though most of the people who read this book will never know the identity of the benefactors who made it possible, Jesus knows what has been done and He will reward them accordingly when He returns. Meanwhile, special appreciation is due to Dian, Jane, Eunice, Velma, Enwelu, Rex, Paul, Marty, and many others for their help with editing, proofreading, and valuable suggestions. I am also indebted to a group of enthusiastic volunteers and a growing number of wonderful people worldwide who understand the unique message presented in this book and faithfully support this ministry.

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to herald the imminent return of the Creator, Jesus Christ, through whatever means possible. We believe the time is near when Jesus' promise will be fulfilled. He said, **“In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there 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)

# No More Delay

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# To the Reader

Please take a moment to consider five topics before reading this book:

**First**, depending on your religious beliefs and background, you may find certain concepts in this book to be disturbing, crazy, or even inflammatory. Be assured, I have no desire to offend or insult anyone. Jesus had no desire to offend or insult anyone when He was on Earth, but He offended many people by revealing new concepts the Father wanted revealed. Bible truth is progressive. The Bible is a gold mine full of treasure. When a new truth is found, it requires rethinking everything previously understood! Every Bible student faces a challenge to move forward with the Holy Spirit as He guides us into all truth (John 6:13).

The truth about God and His plan for our redemption is ever unfolding. (Ephesians 3:8-10) God releases information about Himself and His plans through His Word when the time arrives! For example, God sealed the book of Daniel until the time of the end. (Daniel 12:9) This forward moving process makes the Bible exciting. Some people are happy with what they know and are unwilling to receive new light. Others eagerly search the Scriptures because they know there is an endless supply of new things to learn. I was imprisoned by my inherited religious paradigms for many years, basically, studying the Bible to prove what I already believed. However, as the years went by, I began to find cracks in my own theology. Eventually this led to an awakening when several “puzzle pieces” snapped together. I was overjoyed to find answers to my question and at the same time, stymied by the social consequences. I have been blessed by the fact that Bible truth is progressive. I now believe and understand Bible teachings I did not know or believe previously. My growth in God’s Word and my love and admiration for God continues to expand, because more than anything, I want to know God! The best way

to know God is to allow His Word to speak for itself. Resolving each apparent conflict is exciting. For more than forty-five years my prayer has been, “Lord, I do not care what the truth is, what it costs, or where it leads. I just want to know truth!” No one should expect to find and embrace greater truth if he is unwilling to let go of faulty assumptions and presuppositions.

God’s Word is full of wonderful treasures! If we will take what it says to heart, it will constantly challenge, change, and shape our lives and knowledge of God. This concept irritates those who insist that religious beliefs should never be challenged or changed. As you read this book, you need to be aware that my understanding of the Bible is “a work in progress.” If you have read any of my previous works, you may notice minor changes because I continue to search for truth. Conclusions are proven true by the harmony that comes from the sum of its parts. Because the Bible is God’s Word, consider looking up each Bible reference as you read along so that you can confirm what the Bible says for yourself.

**Second,** I am writing this book because I want to share a short summary of coming events and in the process, I hope to show that Jesus’ behavior is justified for what He is about to do. I also hope that after reading this book, you will be inspired to study deeper into the many diverse topics that are involved with apocalyptic prophecy. Because this book is deliberately brief, it may create more questions than answers in some areas. If you want more information about topics presented in this book, there are hundreds of articles and many hours of video covering various issues on our website. You may freely download them or view them at [www.wake-up.org](http://www.wake-up.org).

**Third,** if you have to stop reading because you find the information in this book is too “troubling,” please do not throw it away! Place this book in your bookcase and let it serve as a time capsule. Then, after World War III begins and several million people have been killed by nuclear exchange, find this book and give it another try. Time will tell if its story is true.

You are reading this book because you are interested in Bible prophecy, so keep it around and compare it with the facts as they unfold.

**Fourth**, if a math teacher tells a student that  $3 + 3 = 6$ , would his answer be an *opinion* or the *result* created by the laws of addition? Of course, if you know the laws of addition, you would conclude the math teacher is presenting the *result*. However, put yourself in the student's shoes. If the student does not know the laws of addition, he cannot tell the difference between a result and an opinion. This is a critical point! Much of the story you are about to read is not my opinion. It is the *result* that four rules of interpretation produce. I believe four self-evident rules were sealed in the book of Daniel until the time of the end. (Daniel 12:4,9) These rules produce a *result* I wish was much different. There is only one way for apocalyptic prophecy to teach what we do not want to believe, and this is through the use of valid rules of interpretation. These self-evident rules may be difficult to appreciate and understand at first, but they are crucial to reaching the intended meaning of apocalyptic prophecy. Like the laws of mathematics, they must be properly applied to produce legitimate results.

### The Four Rules

1. Each apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning and ending point in time, and the events within each prophecy must occur in the order God has provided. (God has declared the chronological order of the elements within each prophecy so that events are not subject to human speculation. If God has not declared the order of events in each prophecy, who has the authority to declare God's intent?)
2. A fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy occurs when all of the specifications, within a prophecy, are met; this includes the order of events outlined in the prophecy. (God has declared the specifications for each element within a prophecy. Therefore, when all of the specifications are met, the prediction is fulfilled. A prophetic element within a

prophecy cannot have more than one fulfillment because no one (a) has the authority to break the chronological order given and (b) no one can declare the number of times that a particular element will be fulfilled.)

3. Apocalyptic language can be literal, symbolic, or analogous. To reach the intended meaning of a prophecy, the student must consider the context, the use of parallel language in the Bible, and relevant statements in the Bible defining that symbol if an element is thought to be symbolic. (Many people claim something in apocalyptic prophecy is symbolic without producing a relevant statement from Scripture that defines the symbol! When God uses a symbol, He defines the symbol. When God uses literal language, He means what He says. When God uses analogous language, He offers a metaphor to help us understand His thoughts. When apocalyptic language is treated properly, God's intended meaning is not ruined.)
4. God uses time in apocalyptic prophecy in two ways: a day for a year and literal time. The presence or absence of the Jubilee calendar determines how time is defined. (The 70 weeks in Daniel 9 amounts to 490 years because the 70 weeks occurred during the operation of the Jubilee Calendar, which ended in 1994 (1437 B.C. to 1994). However, the 1,290 and 1,335 days of Daniel 12 and 1,260 days granted to the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11 are in the future. These time periods are in literal days because they occur after 1994.)

Because millions of Christians have different views on Bible prophecy, unbelievers scoff at our diversity. They claim the Bible can be made to say anything that people want it to say, and point to the endless confusion among Christians as proof! The only way to turn this sentiment around, especially with apocalyptic prophecy, is to use *valid rules* of interpretation. Faulty rules of interpretation will *always* produce faulty results. The evidence behind the four rules of interpretation is

not included in this book because it only presents the results of applying them. If the four rules I use are valid and if I have properly applied them, the result will be the story that you are about to read. To learn more about the four rules and how they are applied, please go to [wake-up.org](http://wake-up.org) and look for a short article about the rules of interpretation at [wake-up.org/?p=7801](http://wake-up.org/?p=7801) You can also freely download my 600+ page book, “*Jesus’ Final Victory*” ([wake-up.org/?p=2706#ref7](http://wake-up.org/?p=2706#ref7)) for a comprehensive study showing why the rules are self-evident in the book of Daniel, and how they are applied to Daniel and Revelation.

**Fifth**, if separated from the larger context of this book, the first chapter could give an impression that God is very cruel and unfairly harsh, so please do not stop reading until you have completed Chapter 2. The devil delights in distorting God’s character and love, causing people to falsely think that God is either a tyrant or a divine Santa Claus. The same God who drowned men, women, and children in Noah’s day (Genesis 6,7) also sent His Son to die on the cross for us because of our sins. (John 3:16) God loves people. He is a great king, changeless, generous, fair, and reasonable. (Malachi 1:14, 3:6; Exodus 15:11-13; Psalm 11:7; Isaiah 1:18)

God’s love for human beings is balanced in three ways. First, He understands the curse of sin and how it affects everyone on Earth. Second, He knows what is best for individuals short and long term. Finally, He knows what is best and most beneficial today for future generations. God has sustained life on Earth for thousands of years, and manages the human race according to policies that are righteous and necessary. He has no evil intent or selfishness. Instead, He acts with love and infinite wisdom. The Bible says the foundations of God’s throne are righteousness and justice. (Psalm 89:14) He is long suffering and patient, “not wanting anyone to perish.” (2 Peter 3:9) He generously extends mercy to sinners day after day, year after year, until a day comes when He determines that extended mercy will have no redeeming effect. When this point is

reached, God responds to man's wickedness. *He destroys defiant and degenerate generations so future generations will be free of their ancestor's perverted values and poisonous attitudes and ways.* If we could see everything going on in the world today as God sees it, I am sure we would agree that God has to act very soon or, as I heard Billy Graham once say, "He will owe Sodom and Gomorrah an apology."

Larry Wilson

June 2018

# Chapter 1

## God is Angry with Us

The title for this book is derived from a declaration that Jesus will soon speak from Heaven's temple. When he says, **"There will be no more delay!"** (Revelation 10:6) life on Earth will radically change. His declaration will be marked by supernatural signs which will engulf the whole world; then, a Great Tribulation of 1,335 days will begin. (Daniel 12:11,12) At the end of the Tribulation, the Father and Jesus will appear together with clouds of glory. (Matthew 26:64)

God is angry with the world because of violence and wickedness. Bible prophecy teaches that His wrath is overdue! John wrote, **"And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets."** (Revelation 8:2) I believe this event occurred in Heaven several years ago; and we know from Revelation 8 and 9 that when each angel sounds his trumpet, a horrible judgment follows that produces unimaginable destruction on Earth.

A delay occurs after the seven angels are given the seven trumpets. John wrote, **"I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the Earth, holding back the four winds of the Earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels *who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: 'Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.'* Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel."** (Revelation 7:1-4, italics mine)

The Bible does not explicitly say that the four angels in Revelation 7 are the first four of the seven angels who received

the seven trumpets, but this conclusion is easy to deduce. Revelation 7:2 says the four angels *“had been given power”* to harm the land, sea and trees; Revelation 8:7-9 indicates that when the first two angels sound their trumpets a third of the land will be “burned up,” a third of the sea will be turned to blood, and a third of the trees will be destroyed. The harmony found between Revelation 7:2 and Revelation 8:7-9 is obvious.

Revelation 7:3 indicates the four angels were told to hold back their destruction of Earth until the 144,000 are selected and sealed. This delay is mentioned in the book of Revelation so students of apocalyptic prophecy can know that Jesus will seal 144,000 “servants” before He releases God’s wrath on the world. These 144,000 will be God’s prophets during the Great Tribulation. Jesus will actually speak through His 144,000 servant/prophets and everybody will hear in their own language “the testimony of Jesus.” (Revelation 12:17; 19:10)

After Jesus seals and empowers the 144,000 for their mission, He will declare, **“There will be no more delay!”** (Revelation 10:6) and the four angels presently holding back the four winds will sound their trumpets. (Revelation 8) The physical damage caused by the four angels will be so great that Earth will never recover.

### **The Revelation of Jesus Christ**

The last book in the Bible is called the “Revelation of Jesus Christ” because it contains an awesome story that centers on Jesus. There is much about Jesus the world has not heard and does not know, but the truth about Jesus and His sovereign authority over Earth will be told! As the revelation of Jesus unfolds, He will become the centerpiece of a great controversy in every nation. He will demand certain things that will divide the people of Earth into two opposing camps. One group will cling to their religious traditions, the other will embrace “the testimony of Jesus” spoken by the 144,000. This coming conflict will be most interesting!

Currently, billions of people have not heard about Jesus. Part of the problem is that of the 6,900 languages spoken in 2017,

the Bible has only been translated into 670 of them. The New Testament has been translated into an additional 1,521 languages, but this still leaves over 5,000 language groups without a complete Bible! Additionally, billions of people have heard about Jesus, but what they have heard is false. Finally, I would guess that half of Christianity today is Christian in name only. Knowing *about* Jesus is altogether different from loving, being disciplined by, and obeying Jesus as Lord and Master.

When Jesus was on Earth, He claimed to be the promised Messiah (Matthew 26:63,64), but Jewish leaders hated Him because He condemned their self-righteousness and worthless traditions. (John 11:50, Matthew 15:9) He also exposed their hypocrisy and challenged their religious control over the people. If Jesus were to come to Earth as a baby and grow up as a Christian, today many Christians would hate Him! This point is mentioned because you need to understand that when the revelation of Jesus occurs, there will be a great conflict among Christians as well as non-Christians.

Before Earth was created, the Father foresaw our generation . . . the final generation. He foresaw our great wickedness, religious gridlock, and cultural diversity. Knowing that most of the world would not properly know Jesus, the Father predetermined that during the Great Tribulation everyone should hear about and thoughtfully consider the salvation which Jesus paid for by His death. (Matthew 24:14) The Father designed an elaborate plan, which includes the revelation that Jesus is deity, a co-eternal, distinct, separate God that lived with the Father for all eternity past. (John 1:1-14) According to infinite wisdom, the Father predetermined the best way to level the playing field was by breaking down the powers of religion and culture through four divine judgments (the first four trumpets). God's coming wrath is not only justifiable, but He will also use it to save as many people as possible! After this planet is damaged beyond any hope of recovery, many survivors will realize their need for a Savior and be more inclined to listen to a gospel they would otherwise reject. Think

about it: The first four trumpets will open the ears of many people to hear Jesus. He will speak through the 144,000 and the world will hear Him declare the terms and conditions for eternal life. Much of the world will think, at first, the words they hear coming from the 144,000 are of human origin, spoken by “fanatics,” but this will not be the case. The revelation of Jesus will occur in the same way “the revelation of the Father” took place when Jesus was on Earth! Jesus told the Jews, **“For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”** (John 12:49,50)

### The Seven First Plagues

According to His foreknowledge, the Father designed fourteen judgments that will reveal the fullness of Jesus during the Great Tribulation. These judgments are both justified and purposeful because God’s wrath is always fair and righteous. He designed the seven trumpets so the largest number of people could be saved. He designed the seven bowls so the universe could witness the nature and properties of divine vengeance. These coming judgments will not be freak manifestations of “mother nature,” and they will not occur in random order or in random places. The book of Revelation describes the *seven first plagues* as “seven trumpets” because they parallel the purpose for the “Feast of Trumpets” in the Old Testament. In Bible times, before the Day of Atonement arrived each year, trumpets sounded in Israel for nine days. They warned the nation that God’s mercy was about to end and all sins must be confessed and restitution made. Likewise, the seven trumpets in Revelation will warn the world that God’s offer of salvation is about to end and all sins must be confessed and made right before God closes the door to salvation. (Revelation 14:14-20)

Jesus will speak through the 144,000 and the Holy Spirit will give weight to their words. This message will undermine the

traditions and teachings of the religious systems of the world. Here are three topics that will be included in “the revelation of Jesus Christ,” which will be very difficult for Atheists, Pagans, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Catholics and Protestants to embrace:

1. Jesus is an Almighty God like the Father. Jesus is a separate, distinct, co-eternal member of the Godhead. The Father found Jesus worthy in 1798 to receive the Book of Life, a book sealed with seven seals. At that time, the Father recused Himself and gave Jesus His throne. (Revelation 5:6-14; Daniel 7:13,14; Ephesians 1:9,10) For over two hundred years, Jesus, not the Father, has ruled in Heaven and over Earth as “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” The Father commands everyone to worship Jesus as they would worship Him. (Revelation 14:7; Hebrews 1:6; John 5:22,23)
2. Jesus is the Creative Agent of the Godhead. (Hebrews 1:2) and Creator of everything that exists. (Colossians 1:15,16) He is. Jesus was with the Father before anything existed. (John 1:1-14)
3. At the end of the 1,335 days allotted for the Great Tribulation (Daniel 12:11,12), Jesus and the Father will appear together, descending toward Earth in brilliant clouds of glory. (Matthew 26:64) Because Jesus is the judge of mankind, He will personally determine who will be permitted to enter into His eternal kingdom. (John 5:22,23; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:13,14) During the Great Tribulation, He will save everyone who keeps His commands (spoken by the 144,000), puts their faith in Him, and obeys His gospel. (1 Peter 4:1,17; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8; Revelation 12:17) Jesus will kill everyone, except the saints, at the Second Coming with a command, represented in the book of Revelation as a sword that comes out of His mouth. (Revelation 19:19-21) The saints will meet the Father and Jesus in the air at the Second Coming. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) Jesus will take the saints to Heaven for 1,000 years (John 14:2,3) where the saints will reign with Jesus as judges. (Revelation 20:6) The

saints will review the records of the wicked, and with Jesus, they will determine the amount of restitution (suffering) each wicked person must “pay back” in Hell. (1 Corinthians 6:2)

## The Seven Last Plagues

I believe the *seven last plagues* will occur during the final 70 days of the Great Tribulation, with ten days allotted to each plague. These judgments are described in Revelation 16 as seven bowls (or vials, KJV) and have a twofold purpose:

First, the seven plagues will confirm that Jesus is Sovereign over the Earth. This is important because the Antichrist will be ruling over Earth at that time claiming to be Almighty God, but he will be powerless to prevent the plagues. Prior to the seven bowls, during the *seven first plagues* (the seven trumpets), the 144,000 will proclaim the sovereign authority of Jesus over Earth, and those who willfully refuse to obey His demands will be marked (by the mark of the beast) as “rebels deserving death.”

Second, the seven bowls represent seven merciless doses of God’s wrath which all rebels will be forced to drink. The idea behind drinking God’s wrath from a bowl (or a vial, KJV) indicates that nothing can prevent a person’s death once he has swallowed the poison. The seven bowls are horrible. They will impose a torturous death on the wicked for defying the King of kings, and for the specific torture and harm they inflicted on His saints.

The Father thoughtfully and deliberately designed the seven first and seven last plagues before the world was created because He wants certain facts known and numerous goals achieved. This is why Jesus will swear an oath to the Father just before He says, **“There will be no more delay!”**

(Revelation 10:5-7) Jesus will promise to faithfully carry out the Father’s plans (horrible as they may seem) because He also wants the maximum number of people saved and the character and conduct of a righteous Father fully vindicated. It is ironic, but encouraging, to know that a numberless multitude will

be saved during the first phase of God's wrath, the seven trumpets! (Revelation 7:9-14)

## What Will Be The Signs of The Great Tribulation?

Shortly before the Great Tribulation begins, two events will occur.

First, World War III will break out. I believe nations will attack one another with nuclear weapons and millions of innocent people will perish. When this annihilation occurs, people around the world will immediately cry out for "peace and safety" (1 Thessalonians 5:3) and God's saints will intensely pray for divine intervention. (Revelation 8:3,4) While the mayhem on Earth is unfolding, Jesus will select 144,000 people to serve as His prophets and He will speak through them after He stops World War III.

Second, while the people of Earth are crying out for "peace and safety" and the 144,000 are prepared for service, Jesus will respond to the saints' prayers by declaring, **"There will be no more delay!"** (Revelation 10:6) When Jesus makes this declaration, the "priestly angel" serving at the Altar of Incense in Heaven's temple will throw down a golden censer (Revelation 8:5) and a sequence of powerful events will unfold.

For 6,000 years, an Altar of Incense has been functioning in Heaven's temple. The Father established this altar on the day that Adam and Eve sinned because it was needed for intercession. The law of God is changeless, requiring a person who sins be immediately executed. In keeping with this law, the Father would have slain Adam and Eve on the day they ate the fruit (Genesis 2:17), but He knew that Adam and Eve had not defiantly sinned. He stayed their execution because Jesus offered to intercede on their behalf. The Father not only stayed the execution of Adam and Eve, He also graciously offered redemption through Jesus to all of their offspring who would listen for and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit; living by faith means obeying the Spirit of God. (Romans 8:14)

When Jesus says, **“There will be no more delay!”** the angel at the Altar of Incense will throw his censer down (Revelation 8:5) to indicate *corporate* intercession is over. Then, God’s wrath against the whole world (corporately speaking) will begin. However, there is good news: Intercession for individuals will continue! Even though Earth is doomed, everyone who will listen to and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit will be saved. Those who live by faith and hold to the testimony of Jesus will face persecution and very difficult circumstances, but they will be saved!

Because we cannot see or hear events transpiring in Heaven, God has *linked* certain events in Heaven with specific events on Earth so Bible students can discover their chronological position within His plans. When the angel at the Altar of Incense throws the censer down, the people on Earth will immediately see astonishing signs and wonders. The Bible says, **“And there came peals of thunder, rumblings [mysterious voices will be heard], flashes of lightning and an earthquake.”** (Revelation 8:5) Jesus begins the Great Tribulation with a display of divine authority in the heavens and in the Earth. The first four trumpets will follow these signs; the destruction will be so horrific that they will dwarf the nuclear madness that is escalating on Earth. The first four trumpets will occur in chronological order and in quick succession. World War III will be forgotten, because a much bigger problem will appear! World leaders and all of the survivors will cower in silence and fear.

### **Revelation Uses Inclusive Language**

Before we proceed, understand that the language in the book of Revelation is inclusive. This means Revelation treats the world as one unit, because the story will be the same for everyone on Earth. For example, when the mark of the beast is implemented in Paris, it will be identical to the mark of the beast in Beijing and Muleshoe, Texas. When the peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and the earthquake

described in Revelation 8:5 occur, *every* nation and *everyone* on Earth will experience the same phenomena. These events will be global and intimidating. Simultaneously, everyone will consider the possibility that Almighty God is a living reality, and He is very unhappy with mankind!

The global earthquake mentioned in Revelation 8:5 marks the beginning of the 1,335 days allotted for the Great Tribulation. This earthquake is interesting because geologists theorized that a “global earthquake” was physically impossible until the early 1990’s. More recently, physical evidence has proven that Earth’s tectonic plates go much deeper into the core of Earth than previously thought and this discovery caused geoscientists to change their thinking. In fact, they now say that the Indian Ocean earthquake which occurred off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia (December 2004) shook the whole world. Locally, it registered 9.1 to 9.3 on the Richter scale and the resulting tsunami killed over 240,000 people. This earthquake is a “prophetic sample” of the coming earthquake described in Revelation 8:5. Imagine the consequences of the entire world shaking violently at 9+ on the Richter scale!

The book of Revelation predicts there will be three global earthquakes during the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 8:5; 11:19; 16:18) Each earthquake will be more powerful and violent than the preceding one, ripping up the surface of the world and tearing down its infrastructures. Travel, communication, banking, shipping, and manufacturing will stop. These coming earthquakes will demolish dams, highway overpasses, bridges, runways, and power grids. They have no equal in past history. The third one will be so violent that the Bible says “all” of the mountains and islands will be moved from out of their places! (Revelation 16:20; 6:14)

### **The First Four Plagues (First Four Trumpets)**

Shortly after the signs in the Heavens and the first global earthquake, the four angels will sound their trumpets and God’s wrath will begin:

**Trumpet #1.** The first angel will sound his trumpet and a meteoric firestorm will consume the world. Billions of white-hot sulfur stones will rain down from Heaven and, interestingly, they will burn up *notably wicked places* all over Earth. The Bible indicates this is how God destroyed the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and it says those cities serve as an example of what is coming upon the ungodly! (Genesis 19:24; 2 Peter 2:6) When the survivors realize that *notably wicked places* were targets of destruction, this will profoundly impact the thinking of many people. They will conclude that God has seen our decadence and He is angry and offended by our degenerate and immoral behavior, and this is why He destroyed places known for sinful conduct!

The destruction caused by the first plague will be mind-boggling. The Bible says one-third of the Earth will be destroyed by fire. (Revelation 8:7) This would be an area about 31 million square miles: the size of Russia, China, the United States, and Antarctica combined. Imagine the physical consequences to this planet while 31 million square miles are being reduced to charcoal. Hurricane force winds will fuel fires of all sizes and fill the atmosphere with smoke. Violent weather will follow. Floods and tornados will be common. People will fear for their lives.

**Trumpet #2.** A few days after the first angel decimates the Earth, a second angel will sound his trumpet. I believe God's servant/prophets, the 144,000, will announce each judgment *before* it occurs so that people can observe who speaks for God. The second judgment will be a civilization threatening asteroid impact. A giant asteroid (maybe two or three miles in diameter) traveling several thousand miles per second will smash into an ocean. (Revelation 8:8,9) This impact will produce a tidal wave that will rise several hundred feet high. A circular wall of water will quickly radiate outward in all directions from the impact zone. This wall of water will destroy thousands of coastal cities located around the perimeter of the ocean. Seaports, well known for

their decadent and immoral behavior, will be washed away. There will be no time or way to escape and overwhelming loss of life will be the result. Even people who do not live close to an ocean will be frightened and distressed, because the oceans will violently slosh back and forth with deadly results. (Luke 21:25) Ships will not be able to cross the ocean, international trade will stop, and men will be powerless to respond. Many survivors will notice that God has cleansed the Earth with fire and water! They will wonder what they should do and what God will do next.

**Trumpet #3.** After God's 144,000 servants announce the third plague, the third angel will sound his trumpet. This judgment will come in the form of a great star (another asteroid impact), but this giant impact will be directed at a wicked continent. Millions of people who live far from the impact zone will perish because ground waves caused by the impact will fracture Earth's strata hundreds of miles in every direction. Sewage, deadly bacteria, toxic chemicals, and other waste buried within the Earth will seep into underground aquifers. Underground rivers will carry poisoned water in all directions, and millions of people who survived the impact because of distance from the impact zone will die from drinking contaminated water. Many survivors will lament that Almighty God is angry and if we do not change our ways, He will kill us all!

**Trumpet #4.** A few days after the third plague, the 144,000 will announce a fourth judgment. The fourth angel will sound his trumpet and a deep rumbling will begin within the Earth. This sound, along with a terrible trembling, will crescendo into a deafening roar. Hundreds of powerful volcanoes will erupt simultaneously. Currently, there are over 1,500 active volcanoes on Earth. The volcanoes will bury millions of people with lava, ash, and rock, but the worst is yet to come. The jet stream will distribute megatons of ejecta, and black clouds will encircle the middle third of Earth. This is where most of Earth's inhabitants live and food crops are grown. (Revelation 8:12) Millions

of people will die from respiratory failure. Crops will fail because sunlight cannot penetrate the soot. Nuclear winter will set in and global famine will commence.

### **Two Billion Dead People!**

The first four trumpets will cause indescribable death, devastation, and anxiety. These coming plagues will terrify the survivors and inflict a fatal blow to the ecosystems of this planet. Our feeble efforts to protect the planet from ozone and climate change will seem foolish. The Father designed it this way so His planet cannot recover from the plagues. The survivors will be left in a miserable state of existence. According to Revelation 6:8, twenty-five percent of Earth's population will perish during these four judgments. Currently, Earth's population is nearing eight billion people and everyone is unaware that two billion people are about to die! How can this be?

### **Four Desperate Questions**

When the world has experienced the shock and awe of God's wrath and realizes His fierce anger with man's degeneracy, many survivors will ask: "*What does God want?*", "*Why is God so angry?*", and "*What is coming next?*" They will also direct a fourth question to their clergy: "*Why didn't you tell us?*"

The gospel of Jesus is best told when people have questions. Jesus knows this and He will speak through the 144,000 so that everyone can hear the "testimony of Jesus." The world will hear a powerful and transforming gospel on that day, which most of the world would not consider today.

# Chapter 2

## Full Cup Principle

For thousands of years, nations have come and gone. Historians may explain certain events that caused a nation to rise or fall, but many people do not realize that a sovereign God sets up nations and takes them down. God does not do this arbitrarily; instead, He does this as circumstances warrant. (Daniel 2:21; 4:17,35; 5:22-30) Consider a recurring problem that God has faced throughout history: Suppose the first generation of a new nation knows everything about God's ways and will, and they are able to pass along 80% of what they know to their children (I am being generous). Then, each succeeding generation also passes along 80% of what they know to their children. In just five generations, the nation will only know one-third as much about God as their original ancestors! This rapid decline in spiritual knowledge and accountability to God explains, in part, why religious interest and church attendance drops with each passing generation. The irony in this illustration is that the fifth generation is unaware of its spiritual darkness. Each generation thinks that it knows God well enough and this is how every nation, from God's point of view, descends into apostasy. This declining process is universal and inevitable, always resulting in greater violence, decadence, and degeneracy. Because God knows man's degeneration is inevitable, He has a wise and changeless solution, a policy that deals with nations so mired in the curse of sin that there is no way out.

### **The Full Cup Principle**

God loves this world and He watches over it at all times. (Proverbs 15:3) Because this planet is cursed by the power of sin, people and nations have natural enmity toward each other. Somewhere on Earth, nations are always at war. God does what He has to do to keep the nations from killing one

other. When God acts, He does what He has to do to benefit all mankind. So, when the fullness of time is right, God destroys a wicked nation for the sake of oncoming generations. (Ezekiel 14:12-21) God loves future generations the same as He loves the present generation. In fact, He already knows the name of each person who will be in a future generation. (Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139:16) Subsequently, His love for forthcoming generations creates a management problem. When a current generation becomes so evil that corporate repentance and reformation is impossible, God has to annihilate the offending generation so that the next generation will have a fresh start. (Nehemiah 9:16-33; 1 Thessalonians 2:16)

I call God's policy for dealing with wicked nations the "Full Cup Principle." I created this phrase to associate God's patience with the idea of a measuring cup. Suppose each new nation is given a measuring cup (a probationary period of grace). Over time, as generations pass and people begin to forget about God and accountability to Him dims, the cup fills with guilt as people slide deeper and deeper into apostasy. When God sees the nation's cup is full, He releases His righteous wrath and destroys it because they will not repent of their apostasy. Once that nation disappears, God gives the land to a new people and the process starts over. Here are a few examples:

### **The Full Cup Principle in the Days of Noah**

The whole world filled its cup in Noah's day: **"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the Earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the Earth, and His heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the Earth - men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air - for I am grieved that I have made them.'"** (Genesis 6:5-7) Some people foolishly argue that a God of love does not kill people, because God Himself says **"Thou shalt not kill."** (Exodus 20:13, KJV) Murder is an act

born out of hatred or predatory behavior. (1 John 3:15; Psalm 11:5-7; Numbers 35) God does not consider carrying out the death penalty murder or an act of hatred. In fact, God says that putting murderers to death is necessary to achieve justice. (Genesis 9:5,6; Numbers 35:31)

The Lord said to Noah, **“I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the Earth.”** Therefore, the argument that God does not kill people is a false claim because it makes God appear to lie. God told Noah to warn the world of the coming flood and Noah did, both in word and action. (Hebrews 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5) When 120 years of grace expired (Genesis 6:3), God fulfilled His promise. He destroyed the men, women, and children who refused to get into the ark. Then, God put His rainbow in the clouds after the flood as a sign that He would never again destroy the world with a flood! (Genesis 9:11-13) When God sees that extended mercy will not produce corporate repentance and reformation, He must annihilate the current offending generation because of His love for oncoming generations.

### **The Amorites and the Full Cup Principle**

When the Lord made the following promise to Abraham, the Amorites had not yet filled up their cup: **“Then the Lord said to him (Abraham), ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.’ ”** (Genesis 15:13-16)

Notice the last sentence in this passage. God promised to give Canaan to Abraham’s offspring *after* the sins of the Amorites had reached their full measure! Earlier, God had given the land of Canaan to the Amorites, but each nation comes with

a measuring cup. Keep in mind that Israel was to possess Canaan on the same terms and conditions that applied to the Amorites. (Leviticus 18:24-25; 25:23) Contrary to what a lot of people think today, God gave ancient Israel the land of Canaan on a conditional basis. Moses warned Israel of this: **“But be assured today that the Lord your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; He will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, . . . After the Lord your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, ‘The Lord has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.’ No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is going to drive them out before you. It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations.”** (Deuteronomy 9:3-5) God destroyed the Canaanites when they filled their measuring cup of wickedness! (Leviticus 18:24-25) Likewise, God destroyed Israel twice, the first in 605 B.C. (Daniel 9:12-14) and then in A.D. 70.

### **Why Was Israel Given a Second Chance?**

Just before God sent Israel to Babylon (605 B.C.), He spoke through the prophet Jeremiah explaining why He was punishing Israel: **“But you did not listen to me . . . and you have provoked me with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves. . . . Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, . . . 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. . . . This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations 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, . . . and will make it desolate forever.”** (Jeremiah 25:7-12)

God caused Israel to be destroyed in 605 B.C. for provoking Him to anger. It is also interesting to note that God also declared through Jeremiah that He would destroy Babylon for the same reasons that He destroyed Israel! This indicates that God deals consistently and fairly with all nations. (Ezekiel 14:12-21) Jesus gave the underlying basis of the full cup principle when He said, **“But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”** (Luke 12:48)

God gives each nation a measuring cup when it forms, and when its cup is filled, God’s wrath breaks out because of defiance. Historians may explain the sequence of events describing *how* a nation fell, but the Bible explains *why* it fell. Civilizations rise and fall by divine decree. When Babylon’s measuring cup was filled, God destroyed it and gave the land to the Medes and Persians. When the Medes and Persians filled their measuring cup, God destroyed the empire and gave the land to the Grecians. The process goes on and on because of the curse of sin.

God gave ancient Israel a second opportunity to fulfill His plans, so we can say He gave Israel two measuring cups. God did this because Abraham’s faith impressed Him and He wanted a whole nation of Abrahams as His representatives on Earth. Therefore, God made a promise to Abraham that his descendants would someday be as numerous as the stars. Also, God wanted Abraham’s descendants to serve as the trustees of His gospel. God wanted to bless the whole world through a nation of priests; a people who would know, understand, and share the love of God. God wanted His gospel of salvation spread to every corner of Earth! Therefore, God entered into a covenant with Israel and He graciously promised from the

beginning that He would give the nation a second chance if they happened to go astray. Notice these two passages:

The Lord said, “**‘But if they [my people] will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers [when they are exiled in the land of their enemies, if they will confess] – their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies – then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. . . They will pay for their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the Lord.’**” (Leviticus 26:40-45, insertions mine)

Solomon referred to the Lord’s promise of a “second chance” in his prayer when He dedicated the temple to God in Jerusalem: **“When they [your people, Israel] sin against you -- for there is no one who does not sin – and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to his own land, far away or near; and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their conquerors and say, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly’; and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name; then from Heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.**

**And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their conquerors to show them mercy; for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that iron-smelting furnace. ‘May your eyes be open to your servant’s plea and to the plea of your people Israel, and may you listen to them whenever they cry out to you.’ ” (1 Kings 8:46-52, insertion mine)**

God kept His word and He did as He promised. He gave Israel a second chance (measuring cup) lasting 70 weeks (490 years - from 457 B.C. to A.D. 34). Unfortunately, Israel did not learn from its mistakes.

You may recall that God also gave the city of Nineveh a second measuring cup, but the succeeding generations in Nineveh did not learn from the mistakes of their forefathers either. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Nineveh about 160 years after the city repented in the days of Jonah. Like Nineveh, Israel turned away from God a second time and went into such deep apostasy that when the Son of God came to Earth and spoke the truth, they accused Him of blasphemy and crucified Him. At that point, the Father could do nothing further with ancient Israel, so He established a new Israel. God destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel in A.D. 70. God gave the land to the Arabs; and later, Muslims put a mosque on Temple Mount. God brought this about to keep the Jews from ever rebuilding a temple there.

### **Israel Filled Up Its Cup**

Shortly before Jesus returned to Heaven, He announced the end of His covenant with the nation of Israel saying, **“ ‘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 [your nation, religion and temple] is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again [I will**

have nothing more to do with your religion or temple] until you 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 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.’” (Matthew 23:37-24:2) History reveals that God would rather have a mosque on the Temple Mount than a Jewish temple.

Shortly before Jesus’ death, He used the idea of a measuring cup in His final discourse with the Pharisees. After Jesus pronounced seven curses on the Jewish leaders for their religious bigotry and hypocrisy, He said, “**Fill up, then, the measure of the [cup of] sin of your forefathers! You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?**” (Matthew 23:32,33, insertion mine) When the Jews rejected Jesus, they filled their cup, and God destroyed them in A.D. 70. Remember, God’s patience has a limit. This principle is easy to understand. The law of love will not permit a hopelessly evil generation to destroy forthcoming generations. This is the only way to be fair to the next generation. When God threw Lucifer out of Heaven, he did it because His patience with rebellion has a limit. Remember, when a nation reaches the limit of divine forbearance, God’s wrath breaks out. In A.D. 70, God sent the Romans to Judea to destroy ancient Israel. Contrary to what is often said today, modern Israel is not an extension or rebirth of ancient Israel. Zionism is altogether a different subject and matter.

### New Testament Examples of the Full Cup Principle

The New Testament confirms the full cup principle. Paul warned the sexually immoral Romans, “**You are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.**” (Romans

2:5,6,8) The Roman Empire, beginning in 168 B.C. filled its cup and God destroyed it in A.D. 476.

About A.D. 55, Paul encouraged the suffering believers in Thessalonica to be patient until the enemies of Christ had filled their cup. **“You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches [in Judea] suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They [the Jews] displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.”** (1

Thessalonians 2:14-16, insertions mine) When Paul wrote this epistle, he knew the Jewish nation had filled its cup of sin and soon, God would send the Romans to destroy Jerusalem. (Luke 21:20-22)

### The Great Tribulation

If you have read this far, you should see a strong parallel developing. The Full Cup Principle and the fourteen plagues mentioned in Chapter 1 are inseparable. God’s coming wrath will be global, because the world is at the same level of apostasy today as the world was in Noah’s day. God has unsealed the book of Daniel so that we can use its four rules to understand His plans. The time has almost arrived. All that remains is for Jesus to declare, **“There will be no more delay!”** During World War III, while men are struggling against one another with nuclear exchanges in a contest of wills, Jesus will act decisively. He will suddenly send signs and wonders, which people will see in the sky and hear in the Earth. A Sovereign Jesus will step into the affairs of mankind with a display of divine power that will dwarf nuclear power. A global earthquake will destroy many of the world’s infrastructures (e.g., communication, travel, banking, power grids, etc.) and then four horrifying judgments will follow. (Revelation 8:5-12) At the end of 1,335 days, Jesus will appear, the Great Tribulation will be over and the 1,000 years

mentioned in Revelation 20 will begin. When the 1,000 years have ended, Jesus will purify this planet with fire. Then, He will create a new Heaven and Earth. The saints will inhabit the new Earth and enjoy it eternally! Their cup will be full, but overflowing with happiness. **“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”** (Psalm 23:5,6)

# Chapter 3

## 144,000 “New Testament” Jews

### **The 144,000 Will Speak the “Testimony of Jesus”**

Before we consider the mission of the 144,000, we need to consider how Jesus selects this group. During the Great Tribulation, there will be several surprising and disturbing developments. One of the biggest surprises will be who constitutes the 144,000. Jesus will bypass most pastors, priests, rabbis, imams, religious experts and scholars. Instead, He will select 144,000 ordinary people, both men and *women*, from all over the world (Joel 2:28-30) who will serve as His spokespersons. If we assume the population of the world is reduced to about six billion people after the first four trumpets occur, and if we assume the 144,000 are evenly distributed around the world – because God loves everyone the same – one of God’s prophets will serve approximately 42,000 people. This is how the “testimony of Jesus” will be delivered to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 12:17; 19:10) Many Christians are aware that the 144,000 will be chosen from the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 7:4), but there is a big surprise coming. The twelve tribes today are not the twelve tribes described in the Old Testament! The Father replaced “Old Testament Jews” with “New Testament Jews” when Jesus was on Earth. The old covenant was abolished and a new covenant was established at that time.

A “New Testament Jew” is a person who has been born again through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Millions of “New Testament Jews” are living on Earth today. Such a person is eager to know truth, has an honest heart, loves God with all his heart, mind, and soul, and his neighbor as himself. Jesus assigns a person to one of the twelve “New Testament” tribes when he is born again. Therefore, only God knows the tribe

to which each “New Testament Jew” belongs. When the time comes for Jesus to select the 144,000, He will have many people from which to make His selection because there are over 12,000 members within each tribe. Notice how the Bible indicates that in the last days, each tribe is larger than 12,000: **“From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed.”** (Revelation 7:5)

The 144,000 will serve as God’s prophets during the Great Tribulation. While they will be few in number compared to the population of the world, they will be like Gideon’s tiny army of 300 who delivered Israel from the oppression of a huge Midianite army. (Judges 7:7; 6:5) God used Gideon and his tiny army so Israel would know that the Lord Himself had provided the victory. During the time of the seven trumpets, God will use another tiny army to spread His gospel all over the world. They will achieve a result that Christians have not accomplished during the past 2,000 years! Jesus will evangelize six billion survivors through the 144,000 in a mere 1,260 days! When Jesus selects the 144,000, He will appear to them in a vision. Like Ezekiel, Jesus will give them a book to eat (His words to speak). (Compare Ezekiel 3:1-4 with Revelation 10:8-11.)

Many Christians have not considered the distinctions between “New Testament” and “Old Testament” Jews. Please consider these:

1. New Testament Jews have a high priest from the tribe of Judah. (Hebrews 7:12-21) Old Testament Jews had a priest from the tribe of Levi. (Hebrews 7:11,12)
2. Jesus is the high priest for New Testament Jews. He serves in the “true temple” which is located in Heaven. (Hebrews 8:1,2) Old Testament Jews do not have a temple, because the Romans destroyed it in A.D. 70.
3. New Testament Jews consider their capital city to be New Jerusalem. (Revelation 3:12; Revelation 21:2) Even Abraham anticipated God would someday construct this

city. (Hebrews 11:8-10; John 14:2,3) Old Testament Jews consider Jerusalem to be their capital city.

4. New Testament Jews have nothing to do with Zionism or modern Israel. The kingdom they expect to inherit is not located in the Middle East. Instead, it will be in the Earth made new. (John 18:36, 37; Matthew 5:5)
5. New Testament Jews live according to a new covenant that Jesus initiated. (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 12:22-24) Old Testament Jews cannot accomplish the requirements of the old covenant because they have no temple. (Deuteronomy 12)
6. Paul says New Testament Jews have a much better set of promises and prophecies than those God gave to Old Testament Jews. (Hebrews 8:6)
7. Paul described a “New Testament” Jew saying, **“A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly [as the result of the circumcision of the flesh], 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, insertion mine, compare with Deuteronomy 30:6)
8. New Testament Jews believe God regards them as the seed of Abraham and heirs of the promises given to him. (Galatians 3:28,29) Old Testament Jews also believe they are the seed of Abraham, but they have to assume their lineage because there are no records proving their ancestry. The Roman army destroyed all Jewish genealogical records in A.D. 70.

There are other parallels between “Old Testament Jews” and “New Testament Jews” worth considering:

1. Jesus delivered Old Testament Jews from Egyptian slavery. (Exodus 12:29; Judges 2:1-6) Jesus delivers New Testament Jews from slavery to sin through His indwelling power. (Romans 6:20-22; 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15)

2. After Old Testament Jews went through the Red Sea, they were no longer Pharaoh's slaves. After New Testament Jews are born again and go through the watery grave of baptism, they are no longer Lucifer's slaves. (Romans 6:3-5,14-18)
3. God did not permit the first generation of Old Testament Jews to enter Canaan because they had no faith in Him. Even after they crossed the Red Sea and God fed them manna from Heaven for two years, they would not believe that He could tear down the great walls of the cities in Canaan. God became angry with their unbelief and the first generation of Old Testament Jews died in the wilderness because of their lack of faith. (Psalm 95:10,11; Hebrews 3:19) New Testament Jews understand that they will not enter the Promised Land and New Jerusalem unless they maintain a non-negotiable faith in God. (Hebrews 11:6) A non-negotiable faith in God means obeying God without regard for the consequences, trusting that He will make all things work together for good. (Romans 8:28)
4. God kept His promise. He took Abraham's descendants into the land which He had promised, but Old Testament Jews could not stay there because of apostasy. Thus far, New Testament Jews have not received the land which God promised to give Abraham, but they believe they will inherit the Earth which includes everything promised to Abraham's descendants!
5. God miraculously sustained Old Testament Jews for 1,500 years (1437 B.C. to A.D. 70). He has miraculously sustained New Testament Jews for the past 2,000 years (A.D. 30 to present).
6. Old Testament Jews anticipated (and still anticipate) a Messiah that would be an ordinary mortal. Old Testament Jews were monotheists. They believed there is one God and God could not possibly come to Earth as the Messiah. New Testament Jews believe in three Gods: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19,20) Some New

Testament Jews believe that Jesus is a co-eternal, distinct, separate member of deity along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. New Testament Jews anticipate that two Gods will gloriously return, the Father and the Messiah who will sit at the Father's right hand at the Second Coming. (Matthew 26:64; Revelation 6:16,17) The Holy Spirit will also be present at the Second Coming living within every saint! (2 Corinthians 1:21,22; 1 Peter 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:14)

7. Old Testament Jews believed the way to eternal life was through self-righteousness, (Matthew 19:16-26) that is, sinners achieved salvation through rigid conformity to the laws of Moses and the Ten Commandments. If a righteous man had any deficiency before God, Abraham's righteousness would make up for it. (Matthew 23:15; Genesis 15:6; Luke 3:8) New Testament Jews believe the Levitical laws were temporary from the beginning. They were a shadow (representative) of events to come. Jesus abolished the Levitical code, initiated a new covenant, and died on the cross. (Luke 22:20; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Colossians 2:9-3:1) In addition to this, some New Testament Jews believe that Jesus did not abolish the Ten Commandments at the cross because they function as a covenant, or promise. They believe the Ten Commandments describe a person's natural behavior when his sinful nature is removed and God's laws are written in his heart and mind. (Hebrews 8:10-12)
8. If you are a New Testament Jew (you have been born again), you understand that for as long as the sinful nature remains within you, you must live in a state of humility. (Matthew 5:5; Proverbs 6:16-19) Sooner or later, some sin will trip you up. The sinful nature will not allow a born again person to live in perfect conformity with God's will very long. (1 John 2:1,2; 5:16) However, if we sin and genuinely regret it, and if we are willing to make restitution (if needed) to make it right, Jesus is willing to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9) Through faith in God and the indwelling power of the Holy

Spirit, New Testament Jews know that victory over any sin is possible and the fruits of the Spirit are promised to all overcomers. (Galatians 5:22,23)

9. Old Testament Jews anticipated (and they still anticipate) that God will establish His kingdom on Earth. New Testament Jews anticipate that God will establish His kingdom on Earth, but only after He has destroyed the wicked and purified the Earth of sin by fire. (Revelation 21:1-4)

### The New Covenant

Many Christians have heard about “the new covenant” Jesus implemented, but few understand its ramifications. While on Earth, Jesus terminated the original covenant made with Abraham’s descendants (Exodus 19:4-6; Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28) by initiating a new covenant. (Luke 22:20) *It is important to understand that Jesus did not hastily or arbitrarily make up a new covenant.* God promised a new covenant 600 years earlier when He sent Israel to Babylon! (See Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:8,9; 9:15.) The Father planned to implement a new covenant all along because from the beginning, He intended to unite Jews and Gentiles who believed in Jesus into one body of believing people! (Ephesians 3:4-12) The Father planned before the world was created that salvation would be based on the ministry, life, and death of Jesus. This is why the old covenant had a sunset provision from the beginning. (Colossians 2:9-3:1)

### Progressive Revelation

The Father reveals Himself and His plans in small steps over time. We know much more today about God’s ways and plans than Moses or David did. Before Jesus created the world, the Father planned to abolish His covenant with Israel so that a new covenant could be established in its place. Paul said: **“Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have**

already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, *which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit* to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 3:2-6, italics mine)

From the beginning, the Father has loved the whole world and He designed that "whosoever will" could be a member of "the kingdom of God." God chose the descendants of Abraham to teach the world about His love and coming kingdom, but Israel failed. After Jesus came to Earth and established the new covenant, God no longer needed the biological descendants of Abraham. Instead, God created a new Israel made up of "whosoever will." Paul explained the Father's plans to Gentile converts in Ephesus saying, **"But now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far away [from the Father] have been brought near [to the Father] through the blood of Christ. For He Himself [Jesus] is our peace, [He] who has made the two [kingdoms, Jews and Gentiles] one [kingdom] and has destroyed the barrier [the old covenant], the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the [Levitical] law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two [nations], thus making peace, and in this one body [of people] to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their [religious] hostility. He [Jesus] came and preached peace to you who were far away [Gentiles] and peace to those who were near [the Jews]. For through Him we both [Jews and Gentiles] have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you [Gentiles] are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people [New Testament Jews] and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,**

**with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.”**

(Ephesians 2:13-20, insertions and italics mine)

The new covenant terminated the sacrifices and offerings of the old covenant. It also terminated the importance of being a biological descendant of Abraham. Of course, Old Testament Jews considered (and today, still consider) the new covenant blasphemous. They attempted to kill Paul for making inflammatory statements against the old covenant. (Acts 23:20,21) However, Paul could not have described the new covenant more clearly when he wrote: **“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed [Greek: sperma, English: sperm], and heirs according to the promise.”** (Galatians 3:28,29)

The new covenant created a new Israel, a self-selecting body of **“whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”** (John 3:16 KJV; See also Revelation 22:17.)

Because Jesus abolished the old covenant and implemented the new covenant with His blood, “whosoever will” can now be an heir of Abraham through faith in Jesus. Abraham’s heirs are not people born of the flesh but of the Spirit! (John 1:12,13; Romans 8:14; Romans 9:8) Salvation comes through faith in God, not through biological heritage. (Hebrews 11:6) God promised Abraham: **“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of *many* nations [including many nations other than Israel]. . . . I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring *all nations on Earth* will be blessed, . . . The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”** (Genesis 17:4; 26:4; 17:8, italics and insertion mine) This covenant has not been realized. Yet, looking into the future, God showed John the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. John wrote, **“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from *every* nation, tribe, people and**

language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.” (Revelation 7:9, italics mine) During the Great Tribulation, a numberless crowd of believers in Jesus will come from many nations and be counted as the faithful descendants of Abraham!

God’s original promise to Abraham included Gentiles (the people from “many nations”). The new covenant makes this possible because Jesus abolished the wall that separated Jews and Gentiles. Now, all who live by faith are counted as God’s children. (Ephesians 2:14) This is what Paul meant when he wrote, “*all* Israel will be saved.” (Romans 11:26)

Finally, twenty-five years after Jesus ascended, the apostle James (the president of the church at that time) understood the twelve tribes of the old covenant had been replaced by twelve tribes belonging to the new covenant. He addressed his epistle to “New Testament Jews” saying, “**James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations** [because of persecution by Jews and Romans]: **Greetings. Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, . . . My brothers, *as believers* in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism.**” (James 1:1; 2:1, insertion and italics mine)

### 144,000 Distributed by Population

During the Great Tribulation, Jesus will speak through the 144,000 and the entire world will hear the “testimony of Jesus.” If we assume the 144,000 will be evenly distributed throughout a population of about six billion people (those surviving the first four trumpets), there will be a ratio of about one prophet per 42,000 people. To put this ratio into a perspective, suppose the population of the United States after the fourth trumpet is 250 million. The U.S. would have about 6,000 of the 144,000, and India, with one billion survivors, would have about 24,000 of the 144,000!

To confirm their divine appointment, Jesus will give the 144,000 an infusion of Holy Spirit power never seen before. They will do all kinds of miracles at will, even holding back the rain (as did Elijah! James 5:17): **“These have power to shut Heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the Earth with all plagues, as often as they will.”** (Revelation 11:6, KJV) It is important to understand that before the 144,000 receive divine power and begin their ministry, God will first remove their sinful natures and seal their hearts so they will not use this amazing power inappropriately.

### **God Will Seal the 144,000**

The 144,000 will be given pure hearts before they begin their work. This will happen when Jesus removes their sinful natures. (Revelation 7:3) The 144,000 will be dedicated to the glory of God, their motives will be pure, and their actions will be selfless, just like Jesus when He was on Earth. According to Paul, when a person is born again, he receives the seal of God. This seal of ownership is not visible to the world, but the world will notice a life transformed by divine power because there is a change in his words and conduct. **“Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as *a deposit*, guaranteeing what is to come.”** (2 Corinthians 1:21,22, italics mine) Every born again believer receives a *deposit* of Holy Spirit power when he surrenders himself to obey Jesus. This deposit of power transforms (sanctifies) the sinner. When Jesus seals the 144,000, *their deposit* will be fully filled, that is, Jesus will remove their sinful nature and they will be wholly sanctified. The 144,000 will be free of sin’s tempting power like Adam and Eve before they fell.

Once a person has his sinful nature removed, he will not live in a state where his sinful and spiritual natures are in conflict. (Romans 7:5-8:11) A person without a sinful nature will *naturally* do God’s will at all times and in all circumstances;

this is entirely different from the current human experience. (Romans 7:20,21) After Jesus removes their sinful natures, He will fulfill this covenant with 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.”** (Hebrews 8:10) John calls the 144,000 “first fruits” (Revelation 14:5) because they will be the first to experience this covenant! The 144,000 will be the first to be set free from their sinful nature. The really good news is that Jesus promises to set everyone free! “Whosoever will” can enjoy His covenant if he is willing to live by faith. (Revelation 13:10; 1 John 5:4) Prostitutes, addicts, murderers, swindlers, and predators will be sealed just like the 144,000 *after* they show Jesus they are willing to live by faith and obey His gospel. I do not know of an amnesty that offers more!

### Intense Conflict

Most of the clergy will despise the 144,000 because Jesus will say things through them that make the clergy furious. The same thing happened when Jesus was on Earth. The Father spoke through Jesus’ mouth and the clergy of Israel were so incensed, they plotted to kill Him. (Acts 3;15; John 12:49,50) The 144,000 will respond to every charge and accusation with words that cannot be defeated because Jesus will do the speaking. The whole world will hear “the testimony of Jesus” with clarity and authority. (Revelation 1:9; 12:17; 19:10) The 144,000 will exalt Jesus in the same way that Jesus exalted the Father. They will present Bible truths. Bible truth will cause a firestorm of controversy because the 144,000 will use it to expose and confront every false doctrine. The testimony of Jesus and Bible truth will infuriate almost everyone, but honest hearted people within each religious system will eventually wake up and embrace it. The enabling power of the Holy Spirit will cause many to recognize Jesus’ voice speaking to them through the 144,000, (John 10:27) who will be attacked, persecuted, punished, and accused of blasphemy.

Eventually, most, if not all of them, will be killed. Remember that Jesus, John the Baptist, nine of the twelve apostles and most of God's prophets were killed for speaking the words God gave them to speak. (Matthew 23:37)

After the first four trumpet judgments occur and the survivors are in a state of shock, religious leaders will loudly proclaim God's wrath has fallen because of man's wickedness. They will falsely claim that more judgments are coming unless the whole world *immediately* changes its behavior. The 144,000 will boldly refute these religious leaders, declaring that no more judgments are coming for the next two and a half years;\* and when the fifth trumpet does occur, it will not be a judgment producing global destruction! People will be confused. People will question who is telling the truth. This controversy will lead honest hearted people to search the Bible, because the Bible is the *only* sacred writing on Earth that reveals the truth about God, His character, ways, and plans.

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\* **Note:** I believe the Bible indicates the amount of time between the fourth and fifth trumpet to be about 2.5 years. Of course, time will tell.

# Chapter 4

## Seven-Headed Beast

### The Seven Religious Systems of the World

The book of Revelation divides the people of the world into seven general religious systems: **Atheism** (including agnostics, deists, etc.), **Heathenism** (tribal religions, occult groups such as Wiccan, etc.), **Judaism** (Orthodox, Reformed, etc.), **Islam** (Sunni, Shiite, etc.), **Eastern Mysticism** (Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.), **Catholicism** (Orthodox, Greek, Anglican, etc.) and **Protestantism** (Baptists, Pentecostals, etc.). The Bible considers Atheism to be a religion because it is a faith-based belief system, that is, atheists *believe* there is no God.

The seven heads on the seven-headed beast in Revelation 13:1 represent the seven religious systems of the world.\* Everyone on Earth belongs to one of the seven religious systems and this will prove surprisingly important as the revelation of Jesus unfolds. When Jesus speaks through the 144,000, He will prove every religious system is blasphemous and false! He has to do this because the people within each system are convinced that their religious beliefs are true.

The seven religions of the world are antagonistic toward one another because they actually worship seven different Gods, and each God requires something different for salvation. Jesus foreknew this outcome when He separated mankind at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) and He intends to use the diversity of mankind to demonstrate a profound point. In every religious system, there are honest hearted people who sincerely love and honor the God they know. All of these individuals have one thing in common: they recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit. (John 10:16)

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\* **Note:** For information, see [wake-up.org/?p=4631](http://wake-up.org/?p=4631)

When the time comes for Jesus to select the 144,000, most of them will not have a Christian background. Some Christians will have a hard time accepting this concept, but they should not. The apostle Paul was not a Christian when Jesus selected him, Paul (Saul) was a devout Pharisee. Jesus saw that he had a wonderful heart, but his head was misguided by his religious heritage and convictions. Like John in Revelation 10, each of the 144,000 will personally meet with Jesus and once He clears a few things up, they will immediately recognize and worship the Creator! The 144,000 will stand firm in their faith because they are honest hearted and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Jesus will choose these servants, both men and women (Joel 2:29), from every tongue, culture, and religious background. He does this so the 144,000 will be effective working among their own people. Jesus wants to save as many people as possible so He will use people that can speak to their own brothers and sisters. God understands man's religious biases, cultural prejudices, and racial emotions. Currently, a Muslim cannot tell a Protestant that his religion is false and expect a good outcome. Likewise, a Catholic cannot tell a Jew that his religion is false and expect a good outcome. However, Catholics can speak to Catholics, Muslims can speak to Muslims, Jews can speak to Jews, and Protestants can speak to Protestants (maybe)!

### **Three Convenient Lies**

The devastation caused by the first four trumpets will cause the religious and political leaders of the world to assemble and discuss God's wrath. The infrastructures of the nations will be in ruins and two billion people will be missing, dead, or dying. World leaders will be moved by fear and circumstances to set aside petty differences. Fearing more divine wrath is imminent, the leaders will humbly discuss many otherwise inflammatory issues behind closed doors. In an effort to determine which god is angry. Is it the Muslim god, "Allah," the Jewish god, "Jehovah," the Christian God called, 'God the Father' " or the Hindu god of destruction, "Shiva" who is responsible for the disastrous events. Of course, no one will be

able to provide conclusive evidence and this will produce the following question: *“Does mankind worship one God having different titles or many different gods?”* This question will be inflammatory because Jews worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but Muslims worship the God of Abraham, Ishmael, and Mohammed. If Jews and Muslims worship the same God, why is the “will of God” for Jews different from the teachings of Mohammed? The Old Testament exalts Jacob’s descendants, not Ishmael’s descendants. (Genesis 17:18-21) At the other end of the table, Catholics and Protestants will have conflict. Both religious systems believe in “God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost” but they are far apart on the properties of salvation. Catholics believe that church sacraments are necessary for salvation and Protestants oppose this. Instead, Protestants believe that salvation comes through faith in Christ (there is diversity on what faith actually means). To make matters even more complicated, the gods of the Muslims, Jews, and Hindus do not have a Son called “Jesus” and these religious systems will strenuously oppose the idea that Jesus is a member of deity.

The leaders will also discuss the prickly matter regarding worship. Catholic traditions do not agree with Protestant traditions, and Islamic traditions do not agree with Hindu or Jewish traditions. Even though everyone agrees there is an angry God, how does a religiously and politically diverse world go about appeasing whichever god has devastated the world and killed two billion people?

The religious leaders of the world are a diverse group and they will be unable to resolve these questions. The survivors in each religious system will be looking to their experts for answers, so the clergy will recognize that as a group, they must promptly do something. A baffling and confusing compromise will be hammered out and agreed upon. Given the extremity of the moment and the compelling belief that more judgments are forthcoming, each religious leader will be forced by circumstances to compromise his fundamental beliefs so the group can appear united as one voice for appeasing God’s

wrath. Given the horrific destruction caused by the first four trumpets, the group will create three lies and justify them as necessary steps to save the world from further manifestations of God's wrath.

### **The First Lie**

The first lie will be *"Everyone on Earth worships the same God, even though we worship Him in different ways and call Him by different names and titles."* People around the world will accept this lie because most of them do not know enough about other religions to know the truth. Since it is politically and religiously inflammatory to declare any God a false god, this inclusive lie will be a convenient way to get around prickly questions about which god is angry. Furthermore, the survivors will be so traumatized that most of them will go along with whatever the experts say. Since most of the leaders will be advocating the same argument, the lie will make sense to many people. This will reveal an interesting irony. As the 144,000 give the testimony of Jesus Christ, Jesus Himself will condemn the different gods of the world. Speaking through the 144,000, He will tell the world that He alone is God, there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5,6) He will tell the survivors that He sent the first four trumpet judgments. He will inform the world that He is returning soon to save those who obey His gospel and to destroy everyone else. Of course, in the early days of the Great Tribulation, most people will not realize that Jesus is speaking through the 144,000. The world will think the 144,000 are crazy.

### **A Second Lie**

Religious leaders will then advocate another lie: *"We have all observed that God's wrath fell on notably wicked places in every nation. This clearly indicates that we are accountable to God for our actions and He is deeply offended by the sinful and decadent ways of all mankind. Therefore, we can only appease God's wrath and restore His favor if we repent and change our ways. We cannot continue doing things that are offensive*

to Him.” Think about their claim for a moment: “*Therefore, we can only appease God’s wrath and restore His favor, if . . .*” This assertion is completely false, but the religious leaders will not know that they are wrong and neither will most of the survivors!

If the religious leaders of the world properly understood the books of Daniel and Revelation, they would know God’s plans. They would know that mankind cannot stop God’s wrath once it is activated and after the fourth trumpet judgment, no more judgments would be imminently forthcoming! As I calculate it, the fifth trumpet will occur about two and one-half years after the fourth trumpet. Because religious leaders were caught off guard by the first four trumpets, they will think more judgments are imminent and they can do something to stop them! This will be the motive for creating the seven-headed beast mentioned in Revelation 13:1. The seven-headed beast will be a crisis government that religious leaders from the seven religious systems of the world will direct. Their goal will be the appeasement of God’s wrath so that His judgments will end. However, they will be insulting God. Revelation 13:1 highlights this irony by indicating that a blasphemous name is written on each of the beast’s seven heads.

Even though the religious systems of the world are different, they are alike in many ways. Each system is self-assured and convinced that it *knows* God and His will better than the other systems. Each religious system has its own experts in matters pertaining to God, so the world will be closely watching the clergy when God’s wrath becomes an issue of paramount importance. Each religious system will look to their clergy for explanation, guidance, and comfort. Unfortunately, the result will be “the blind leading the blind.” (Matthew 15:14) This is why the Bible says the world will follow after the beast as it leads the way into blasphemy! (Revelation 13:3)

If you are reading this book during the Great Tribulation, you should know that once the angel casts down the censer in Heaven’s temple (Revelation 8:5), corporate intercession for

mankind ends and Jesus will never resume this intercession. This means that once God's wrath begins, it cannot be stopped. God's wrath will follow an unconditional course ending when the world is destroyed at the Second Coming. Once the 1,335 days allotted for the seven trumpets and seven bowls begin, praying and repentance will have no effect on staying or changing the remaining plagues. There will be no turning back. To put this matter in perspective, we can be sure there was a lot of praying and repentance in Noah's day when the rain started to fall. However, the crying, praying, and repentance did not stop the flood. There will be no more mercy for the world (corporately speaking) once God's wrath begins even though there will be mercy for individuals! For the first 1,260 days of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will speak through the 144,000 offering salvation to everyone willing to accept His terms and conditions.

### The Third Lie

The leaders of the seven-headed beast will create a third lie to justify their *extreme* solution for dealing with God's wrath. Even if they cannot resolve their theological differences, they will reason that *if* they eliminate behaviors that God deems offensive, His wrath will end! The clergy will also conclude that a global reformation can only happen *if all* of the political leaders of the world will give them unfettered authority to accomplish this objective. They will think they can dictate the needed changes and the political leaders can implement their demands. The devil will jump into the mix to make their suggestion and ambition appear doable. He will give miracle-working powers to some of the clergy. (Matthew 7:21,22; Revelation 13:2) These astonishing miracles will convince the political leaders of the world that God is calling for a dramatic change. Jesus warned, **“For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.”** (Matthew 24:24,25)

In Catholic and Protestant countries, priests and pastors will make the following argument: “Ever since time began, God has chosen and given authority to certain people to teach and lead others in spiritual matters. Before Noah’s flood, there were the patriarchs. After the Exodus, God selected the Levites to serve as His priests and teachers. After God established the Christian church, He chose certain people to serve as priests, pastors, teachers, and evangelists. Every religious system on Earth has similarly appointed spiritual leaders. Therefore, after consulting with the religious and political leaders of the world, we have all agreed on a solution that will appease God’s wrath. We have created a new government that will appease God’s wrath in each nation. This new government will provide direction through its laws and the political leaders of the world will enforce them. Repentance and reformation is mandatory if we want the favor and blessings of Almighty God.”

### **The Clergy Will Use Martial Law**

During the first four trumpets and before the seven-headed beast takes control, the world’s political leaders will declare martial law. Governmental leaders declare martial law in times of crisis when issues require instant decisions. Hundreds of legislators or members of parliament cannot meet, deliberate, and make decisions, because the situation is just too fluid. Martial law is important to this story because without martial law the political leaders of the world would not be able to single-handedly surrender their respective nations to the authority of the crisis government (the seven-headed beast), which the clergy will create. With martial law in place, political leaders can do this without the consent or deliberation normally used by legislators, parliaments, or congresses! The freedoms and inalienable rights guaranteed by charters and constitutions are set aside so that presidents, prime ministers, and governors can govern without impediment. Dire circumstances and fear of more coming judgments will cause the political leaders of the world to surrender to the directives of the seven-headed beast. This beast, that comes up out of the sea in Revelation 13:1, will be man’s united response to God’s

wrath and this is how it will spring to life. Through martial law, the beast will be *given* (gifted with) authority over **“every tribe, people, language and nation.”** (Revelation 13:7) Unfortunately, history proves that church/state governments are horrible forms of government. Typically, they are far more intolerant and cruel than the worst secular governments.

When religion dictates the laws of a nation, the misery of its citizens always increases. The environment will become hostile and intolerable, especially for those who love God and His Word. Those who cherish the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience have nowhere to go in a religiously dominated state. There is no personal freedom to worship God in a church/state unless your religion is the dictating religion. Even then, when a church/state determines God’s will for its subjects, this does not mean everyone within that religious body will agree on what God’s will is. Nothing is more grinding and insufferable than one man cramming his religious views down the throat of another man, even if the two belong to the same religious system.

In recent years, the world has witnessed the inhumane and gruesome behaviors of the Taliban in Afghanistan and ISIS in Iraq and Syria. God has placed both of these governments on display to show the world the atrocities of a church/state theocracy. They are prophetic samples of the seven-headed beast! This revelation is not new. Consider the destruction caused during the Russian Civil War (1917-1922 - 9.5 million deaths), by Nazi Germany (1935-1945 - 7 million), and by Mao Zedong’s regime (1949-1975 - 45 million)! When civil power rests in the hands of a few hardline religious or political leaders who are determined to control their subjects’ behavior and thoughts, history reveals that dissenters receive deadly consequences.

Europe has had a well-documented history with church/state governments. For 1,260 years (from emperor Justinian to Napoleon - A.D. 538-1798), Europe’s political leaders were subservient to the clergy of the Catholic Church. Many millions

of Protestants who resisted the teachings of the Church during the middle ages were killed, tortured, and imprisoned. This is a historical fact that many Europeans seem to have forgotten. Since World War II, the Jews have attempted to maintain the awareness that six million of them died during the Holocaust. However, Protestants today have largely forgotten the cruelty of the Dark Ages. During the past 200 years, Protestants have allowed the long struggle for religious freedom and the price paid for religious freedom to be subverted by a false gospel; a gospel that many martyrs of the reformation would consider heresy today.

### **The Powers of a Pope**

When the seven-headed beast forms, Revelation 13 indicates the religious and/or political leaders will elect the pope to lead the new government. The pope will not serve as a great king ruling over a united kingdom; instead, he will be “*primus inter pares*,” a Latin phrase meaning “first among equals.” An illustration of the idea of “first among equals” is the Gulf War. In the 1990’s, the United States and 31 nations formed a coalition to engage Iraq and Afghanistan in a war on terror. After considering the price paid in lost lives and the monetary value of the assets involved, one can say of the Gulf War that the U.S. was “first among equals” relative to the other nations. Although the pope will be “first among equals,” the seven-headed beast will have seven heads. Each head will represent a large block of people (such as Islam or Protestantism) and, of course, the pope will represent his religious system.

Several Catholic scholars anticipate a day is coming when a pope will lead the world in a unified religious reformation! For example, the late Dr. Malachi Martin (1921-1999), a Jesuit scholar and author of over fifteen books, wrote that a prophecy received by a child would be fulfilled during the days when Pope John Paul II was alive. Here is the story: On April 4, 1919, the Virgin Mary is alleged to have appeared to three children in Fatima, Portugal. Supposedly, the Virgin Mary gave each child a secret message concerning the Catholic Church.

The third secret message was not published during his lifetime, but Dr. Martin reported that Pope John Paul II read the message. Dr. Martin believed the third message covered three main topics. He wrote, “A physical chastisement of the nations, involving catastrophes, man-made or natural, on land, on water and in the atmosphere of the globe [is coming upon the world]. A spiritual chastisement, far more frightening and distressing – especially for Roman Catholics – than physical hardship, since it would consist of the disappearance of religious belief, a period of widespread unfaith in many countries. . . [However, he adds], the physical and spiritual chastisements, according to Lucia’s letter [one of the three children alleged to see the Virgin Mary], are to be gridded on a fateful timetable in which Russia is the ratchet.” (Martin, Malachi (1990) *The Keys of This Blood*, NY: Simon and Schuster, pp. 630-631, insertions in brackets mine) Dr. Martin believed the third secret message required whoever was pope in 1960 (actually Pope John XXIII) to publish the text of the “Third Secret” for the whole world to read and know. Then, the Pope, with all his bishops acting collegially, should consecrate Russia to Mary. “If these requests [the two conditions, publishing the third letter in 1960 and consecrating Russia to Mary] were denied, the chastisements would then follow as surely as night follows day.” (Martin, p. 631, insertion in brackets mine) Since neither condition was fulfilled, Dr. Martin was convinced the two chastisements would occur during the reign of Pope John Paul II, who was aware of the third secret message.

Dr. Martin continues, “He [Pope John Paul II] is waiting, rather, for an event that will fission human history, splitting the immediate past from the oncoming future. It will be an event on public view in the skies, in the oceans, and on the continental landmasses of this planet. It will particularly involve our human sun, which every day lights up and shines upon the valleys, the mountains and the plains of this earth for our eyes. . . Fissioning it will be as an event, in John Paul’s conviction of faith, for it will immediately nullify all the grand designs the nations are now forming and will introduce

the Grand Design of man's Maker. John Paul's waiting and watching time will then be over. His ministry as the Servant of the Grand Design will then begin. His strength of will to hold on and continue, and then, when the fissioning event occurs, to assume that ministry, derives directly from the Petrine authority entrusted solely to him the day he became Pope, in October of 1978. That authority, that strength, is symbolized in the Keys of Peter, washed in the human blood of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. John Paul is and will be the sole possessor of the Key of this Blood on that day." (Martin, p. 639, insertion in brackets mine)

Even though Dr. Martin's expectations have not been fulfilled and the basis for his prophetic views are suspect, his anticipation of a "fissioning event" is not as far out as one might think. Revelation 7 describes four angels holding back God's wrath until the 144,000 are selected and sealed. Revelation 8 describes four horrific judgments that will occur, and Revelation 13 describes the rise of a seven-headed beast designed by the religious leaders of the world to appease God's wrath. These are circumstances that will catapult the Roman Catholic Church into a leading role. Revelation 13:3 says that one of the seven heads seemed to have had a deadly wound, **"but the fatal wound had been healed."** This specification points backward to a time when the papacy ruled over the kings of Europe and forward to a time when the papacy will rule over the seven heads as "first among equals." A little background explanation may be helpful.

For over 1,000 years, the pope and clergy of the Catholic Church crowned the kings and queens of Europe. The Church wielded enormous influence over Europe. However, the Catholic Church received a deadly wound in 1798 when Napoleon refused to recognize the pope's civil (political) powers and the pope refused to give them up. Napoleon's forces confiscated the Vatican in February 1798, arrested Pope Pius VI, and sent him to France where he died six weeks later. On the surface, the fall of the papacy in 1798 seems to be a

forgotten footnote in the history of the Catholic Church. Today, we know that when Napoleon captured the Vatican and exiled the pope, the papacy's church/state powers over Europe and elsewhere quickly waned. For example, the Latin American Inquisitions (inquiries to determine who was a loyal Catholic) ended between 1813 and 1825; the Portuguese Inquisition ended in 1821; the Spanish Inquisition ended in 1834; and in Italy, the Papal States Inquisition ended in the well-publicized Mortara Affair (1858-1870). ([wake-up.org/?p=7481](http://wake-up.org/?p=7481))

Since 1929, the Catholic Church has risen to global prominence. Its recovery began when Mussolini restored Vatican City to the Church in the Lateran Accords (February 1929). Today, the Catholic Church claims more than 1.5 billion members and its popes often meet with heads of state around the world. If you think it through, the pope's coming advancement as "first among equals" is not hard to anticipate. No other religious system on Earth is globally organized and politically recognized like the Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church is unique among the religious systems of the world in that it currently has diplomatic relations with 179 countries. ([wake-up.org/?p=7483](http://wake-up.org/?p=7483)) Its well-established network will be a tremendous asset during the worldwide crisis caused by the first four trumpets. The one religious organization that can facilitate and coordinate matters around the world will make the sitting pope (whoever he is), "first among equals."

### **Church vs. State**

During Old Testament times, God established a system of government in which Israel's kings sat on the throne and a high priest served in the temple. God did not permit any one person to have authority over church *and* state. When arrogant king Uzziah attempted to cross the line and officiate at the altar, God struck him with leprosy. (2 Chronicles 26:16-21) Judaism and Protestantism have historically advocated for a line of separation between church and state, but the Catholic Church, Islam, and other religious systems do not. For example, Muslims often prefer Sharia law and prior to 1798,

Catholics preferred Church law. Of course, when a church/state is impossible because of monarchies, democracies, and dictatorships, religious systems settle for whatever influence and advantages they may find.

The religious leaders of the Catholic Church dominated the nations of Europe for 1,260 years. The root of this domination began centuries earlier when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and wiped out the headquarters of Christianity. Since the Christian Church had no central authority or hierarchy, it flourished in different locations and under different leaders. As time passed, groups of Christians began to have theological differences. For example, early Christians in Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome came to different conclusions about the deity of Jesus. They also differed on matters of Christian conduct and orthodoxy necessary for salvation. This diversity became controversial and during the third century A.D., the church in Rome began to hold councils to codify the beliefs and practices of Christians. The church in Rome also assumed authority over the formation of a creed which constituted Christian doctrine. Some of the early churches within the empire went along with the church at Rome, but others rebelled. This caused a growing need to stem heresy and to better consolidate the Christian faith into one cohesive body of knowledge.

To justify its assumed authority, the church in Rome was the first to advocate the idea that God had given one man authority over the Catholic Church. The word catholic, as used here, means universal, as in the universal Christian church. They claimed this authority through a conversation that Jesus had with His disciples. **“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ He asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You [singular] are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, *Simon son of Jonah*, for**

**this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in Heaven.’**” (Matthew 16:13-17, insertion and italics mine)

On this occasion, Jesus had an important reason for confronting the disciples with His identity. When Jesus asked the question, the Father through the Holy Spirit instantly put words in Peter’s mouth, causing Peter to plainly state to the other disciples that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. These words were shocking for the disciples because the Jews believed a son was the equal of his father. (John 5:18) Therefore, when Peter declared Jesus to be the equal of Almighty God, the disciples were stunned!

This event occurred just before Jesus announced that *He* was establishing a new religious system called “the church.” The Father made sure that Jesus was properly identified before Jesus made the announcement. This is why the Father spoke through Peter. The Father also designed that Peter’s bold declaration would help Jews to abandon their synagogues later on.

Jesus replied to Peter using his formal name, “Simon son of Jonah.” Jesus then proceeded to use two Greek words, “*petros*” and “*petra*,” to disclose a divine truth. Turning to Peter, Jesus said, “**And I tell you that you are Peter** [Greek: *petros*, a piece of a rock or a small stone], **and** [then declaring of Himself, He said, but] **on this rock** [Greek: *petra*, a massive rock, actually the Rock (the Petra) of Israel] **I will build my church, and the gates of Hades** [even the grave] **will not overcome it.**” (Matthew 16:18, insertions mine)

Jesus used the words, *petros* and *petra*, only after Peter divulged His identity, because the Jews were well acquainted with the idea and the phrase, “The *Petra* of Israel.” (Genesis 49:24; Deuteronomy 32:18; 2 Samuel 23:3; Psalm 18:31; 1 Corinthians 10:4) The disciples grew up believing in monotheism (e.g., one God exists and His name is Jehovah). They did not realize until this moment there was more than one God. Suddenly, they learned that Jesus, the Son of God,

the *Petra* of Israel, was the God of the Old Testament! Can you imagine their surprise? Standing before them and in their presence was the Rock of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Jesus continued speaking to His disciples, **“I will give you [and to all who believe in Me] the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven.”** (Matthew 16:19, insertion mine)

Centuries later, church leaders in Rome interpreted Matthew 16:18 to mean that Jesus gave one disciple and presumably his successors “all authority” over matters on Earth. This is why, through the ages, popes have been called “The Vicar [substitute] of Christ.” Catholics believe Jesus has given the popes sovereign power to bind or loosen anything on Earth. Dr. Malachi Martin affirmed this belief. Naturally, after the church made the claim, it has tenaciously defended this idea and the assumed power that goes with it. A superficial reader of the Bible might easily reach the same conclusion after reading Matthew 16:18,19. Therefore, it is no surprise that today many sincere Catholics believe that Jesus gave Peter and his successors “all authority” over matters on Earth.

### **What Did Jesus Mean with Peter and the Rock?**

The Bible tells a different story than Catholic theology presents. There is no evidence in the Bible showing the disciples understood that Jesus gave Peter any special authority on that occasion. In fact, after Peter declared that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, he went on to deny Jesus three times. Then, years later, Paul reprimanded Peter for treating Gentile believers as if they were not members of Jesus’ church. (Galatians 2:14)

Peter is not mentioned as the president or leader of the Christian faith in the New Testament, and the latest books in the New Testament were written after Peter’s death. Furthermore, the first president of the Christian church was James, not Peter. (Galatians 2:9-12; Acts 15:13) In fact, if one

disciple stands out above the others in the New Testament as Jesus' favorite, it would have to be John. The Bible identifies John as "the disciple that Jesus loved" four times.

Looking outside the Bible, early church history indicates Christians did not understand or use Matthew 16 to promote the authority of one man until the fourth century. Christian leaders in other countries were dismayed when the church in Rome began using this argument in its effort to consolidate control over doctrine and to establish its authority over everything called "Christian." When Justinian (A.D. 482-565) took the throne of what was left of the Roman Empire, he, not the pope, created the "Holy Roman Empire." In A.D. 476, the ancient Roman Empire was destroyed and fractured into ten kingdoms. In a bid to rebuild and unite the ancient Roman Empire, Justinian, in A.D. 533, gave Pope Silverius the power to determine who was an orthodox Christian and who was a heretic. A few years later, Justinian forced Pope Silverius out of office and installed someone he could trust, Pope Vigilius. Little did Justinian realize that in giving the pope the task of deciding who was an orthodox believer, he gave away the throne of the Holy Roman Empire. A succession of popes became the ultimate authority over monarchs and queens for more than a thousand years.

About 1450, Gutenberg invented the printing press which enabled him to publish the first mass-produced book, a 1,202 page edition of the Christian Bible. Bibles were distributed among Catholic laymen and after studying the New Testament for themselves, they began to demand reformation within the Church. They discovered the church had deviated significantly from the gospel of Jesus. The Bible exposed many church errors and lies. In 1517, Martin Luther highlighted many church errors when he nailed his 95 theses to the church door of Wittenberg Castle. The church tried to capture him and put him to death for heresy, but powerful people protected Luther. If the church could not arrest him and put him to death, it could at least keep him from receiving eternal life by

denying him access to the sacraments (rituals). Although this bit of background history on the pope's authority may seem unimportant, it has been included because the Catholic Church and its pope will use the words of Jesus improperly. The pope will be selected as the "first among equals" because the Catholic Church is the only religious system having diplomatic relations with most nations. His appointment and authority will be immediately respected by 1.5 billion Catholics because of the historical way Catholics interpret Matthew 16.

When Jesus said to His disciples, **"I will give you [not meaning Peter alone, but to all of my disciples] the keys of the kingdom of heaven"** (Matthew 16:19, insertion mine), Jesus had an important purpose for doing so. Jesus meant that in His absence, His followers, the members of His church, would have authority for self-direction and self-determination. (John 16:12-15) Jesus also promised the Holy Spirit would sustain and guide the church to ensure that His church would endure until His return. Through the ministry of the Spirit, Jesus would lead His followers into greater truth. The church of Jesus was not founded on *petros*, a small stone; Jesus founded His church upon Himself, *petra*, The Eternal Rock of Ages. He has the power over life and death (*Hades*, the grave). (Revelation 1:18) Jesus decentralized the authority of His church so that no man could have authority over everyone else! (Acts 15:1-6; 1 Timothy 5:17) Most religious systems in the world today are decentralized when it comes to spiritual authority. For example, Muslims have many imams, even Grand Mufti's, but no one imam has authority over all Muslims. The same is also true for Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and Protestants.

### **Nagging Question of How to Appease God**

We have considered some background information on the origin of the Christian Church, the wounding of the papacy in 1798, and the forthcoming selection of a pope as the leader of the seven-headed beast. Now, consider this: After the seven-

headed beast comes to power and no further judgments will occur for two and a half years, the clergy leading the seven-headed beast will soon take credit for having appeased God's wrath and saving the world! They will boast that their solution was the *right solution* because no more judgments have fallen. However, their solution will do nothing but insult God and hurt His saints! **“He [the seven-headed beast] was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them.”** (Revelation 13:7)

Of course, there will be some need for coordination, cooperation, and compromise among the seven religious systems of the world, but there will also be *endless confusion* and disturbing conflicts. For example, Muslim representatives will direct Muslim nations on how to best appease God's wrath. Catholic and Protestant representatives will direct those nations that have Catholic or Protestant majorities. Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Atheist leaders will do the same for their nations. The seven-headed beast will exercise great power over the nations and many people will foolishly believe that God has ordained the crisis government. Religious leaders and false prophets will perform counterfeit signs and miracles, and their lies will be convincing. However, the clergy of the seven religious systems will not be able to answer one nagging question: If there is *one* angry God, how can He be appeased in seven different ways? Remember, the first of the three great lies is “There is only one God having different titles.” Logic suggests there must be only *one* way to appease *one* God.

### The Abuse of Law

The primary work of the seven-headed beast will be that of crafting “sin-less” laws; e.g., laws forbidding conduct that God deems offensive. The political leaders of the nations will direct their law enforcement agencies to impose and enforce these laws, street by street, block by block. In effect, police with a religious mandate will patrol the whole world, a practice exercised in some Muslim countries today. The Muslim enforcers are known as moral or religious police. There will be

no due process for those arrested. Congresses and parliaments will have no authority. Martial law puts absolute authority in the hands of a very small number of people. Just a few religious and political leaders will control the whole world and the devil will control these leaders. (Revelation 13:2) The result will be the abuse of law, and a war against those who honor the law of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 12:17)

### Summary

First, World War III will occur. There will be nuclear exchanges and millions of people will perish. Then, during the mayhem of this war, Jesus will select and seal 144,000 people to serve as His prophets. Then, Jesus will say, **“There will be no more delay!”** Signs in the Heavens and the Earth will follow and there will be a global earthquake. World War III will end abruptly when God’s wrath begins. The first four angels will sound their trumpets and four devastating judgments will occur. One-third of Earth will be annihilated, then two civilization-threatening asteroids will impact our planet, and finally, hundreds of volcanoes will erupt. These events will create trauma and panic among the survivors. Many people will tremble at the power and majesty of God; they will literally fear God!

Martial law will be quickly imposed throughout the nations of the world as each political leader scrambles to manage his crisis. Realizing that God has fatally harmed the whole world and that two billion people are either missing, dead, or dying, world leaders will create a crisis government (the seven-headed beast) to appease God’s wrath. Believing that more judgments are imminently coming, the political leaders of the world will agree to implement the demands of a united clergy. The clergy will claim the only way to appease the Almighty is to eliminate all immoral and offensive behavior. Jesus will speak through the 144,000 who will stand in opposition to the efforts and declarations of the seven-headed beast. There will be great confusion and conflict. The seven-headed beast will dictate many silly laws to appease God’s wrath and in turn,

the political leaders will work through their civil authorities to enforce these laws. Everyone will obey the laws of the seven-headed beast or be punished. Bible prophecy presents this scenario in the clearest of terms: **“He [the seven-headed beast] 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, insertion mine)

The Father carefully designed this scenario thousands of years ago to force our diverse world together to appease a God that most of the world does not even know, respect, or worship. The irony is that during this upheaval the world will learn that the God who has devastated the world, ruined the nations, and killed two billion people is, Jesus Christ, our Creator. He made us, He owns us, and He deserves our worship. The 144,000 will tell the world that Jesus Christ is Sovereign God and the Savior of mankind! (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; Revelation 14:7) This will be an extremely difficult fact for people in many quadrants of Earth to accept.

# Chapter 5

## Coming War over Worship

Unexpected developments affecting the entire world are coming and the survivors will not understand them. One surprise is a coming war over worship. I call this war, World War IV, because it will begin after World War III has ended and will involve every person on Earth. Currently, we cannot imagine a war like this. Most people would say it is impossible. However, the totality of the destruction that the first four trumpets cause is also unimaginable. Most people would consider the prediction of a coming worldwide government directed by seven religious heads to be pure fantasy. Like it or not, believe it or not, the Bible predicts a *new world order* is coming. This unexpected surprise will be caused by man's response to God's wrath, which is also unexpected.

After God's wrath begins, many people will think the best step mankind can take is establish the seven-headed beast government. Ironically, as the leaders of the world implement their plans to appease God, they will persecute those who are doing their best to please Him! The saints believe that God's laws have higher authority than man's laws (Acts 5:29) and God should be worshiped according to the dictates of conscience. (Revelation 22:17; John 3:16) The seven heads of the beast will arrogantly presume to know God's will and everyone who resists their laws will be punished. If there is any good news regarding this coming war, it is the *war over worship* will end after forty-two months (shortly before the Second Coming). (Revelation 13:5)

Consider the following passage from Revelation 13: **“The whole world was astonished** [by the sudden creation of the seven-headed beast] **and** [at first, most of the survivors] **followed** [along with] **the** [purpose of the seven-headed] **beast.** [However, in obeying the laws of the seven-headed

beast,] **Men worshiped the** [great red] **dragon** [who is that ancient serpent, the devil] **because he had given authority to the** [seven-headed] **beast, and they also worshiped the** [seven-headed] **beast and asked, ‘Who is like the** [seven-headed] **beast?** [Who can resist its sweeping authority and succeed?] **Who can make war against him** [without being killed or severely punished]?’ **The** [seven-headed] **beast was given a mouth to utter proud words** [to the world, the leaders presumed to speak for God, they spoke with boasting] **and blasphemies** [declarations that are insulting to God] **and** [the beast was allowed] **to exercise his authority for forty-two months. . . He** [the seven-headed beast] **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** [including the United States, China, Russia and Europe]. ***All inhabitants of the Earth will*** [eventually] **worship the** [seven-headed] **beast** [if they want to live] - **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 13:3-8, insertions and italics mine) John writes several declarations in this passage that are hard to believe, and the devil knows they are especially difficult to accept if we do not, first, understand the devastation caused by the first four trumpets! So, he keeps the world in blissful ignorance concerning God’s coming wrath, especially the seven trumpets.

Now that you have read Revelation 13:3-8, remember that man’s purpose for the seven-headed beast is to appease God so that His wrath will end. The devil’s purpose will be to persecute God’s people, and God’s purpose will be to separate the sheep from the goats! It is amazing how well the seven-headed beast meets the purpose of these three separate entities!

The Bible says, “**All inhabitants of the Earth will worship the** [seven-headed] **beast.”** (Revelation 13:8) The Greek word used for worship in verse 8 [*proskuneo*] means to kiss, surrender, or render submission. *Proskuneo* is important

within this context because it describes the ancient practice of showing honor and submission to people who held power over life and death by bowing and kissing the ring of a king, queen, or pope. The prediction in Revelation 13:8 is uncomfortable because it also states: **“All inhabitants of the Earth will worship the [seven-headed] beast – all whose names have not been written in the Book of Life belonging to the Lamb”**

In spite of all the good the seven-headed beast intends to do, it will quickly and unexpectedly morph into a harsh government which the devil controls. The seven-headed beast will be the devil's hand puppet so he can make war on the saints. **“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest [the last] of her offspring – those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”** (Revelation 12:17, insertion mine) The devil will give many false prophets miracle working power in exchange for control of the seven-headed beast. Jesus will give 144,000 prophets miracle-working powers so that people will not be led astray. The contest between true and false prophets will be intense. God allows the devil and his false prophets to mislead people (if possible) so that people will have a choice. The coming war over worship will be a testing time to separate those who will believe falsehoods and those who will believe the Bible and testimony of Jesus. *People who love and seek truth are not convinced by miracles alone, counterfeit or genuine.* God does use miracles at times to affirm that something is important, but a miracle in itself does not prove a statement is true; even Pharaoh's magicians produced miracles! (Exodus 7:11-22) God's Word is proven true by the harmony that comes from the sum of its parts and from Holy Spirit conviction! Honest hearted people will have their eyes opened to see and understand the contest occurring, but the wicked will not be aware of the devil's deceptive efforts. False prophets will perform counterfeit miracles to deceive the elect, if that is possible. (Matthew 24:24) **“None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.”** (Daniel 12:10)

### Why Does God Allow the Saints to Suffer?

Ever since sin's curse began, God has permitted the devil's followers to kill and persecute His followers. After the curse of sin tainted Heaven, God cast the devil and his followers out because all sinners will become predators given enough time and opportunity. Lucifer became the first predator. He lied to the angels and then lied to Eve. When Adam fell into temptation because of his love for Eve, sin's curse was passed to their offspring. God has wisely allowed the curse of sin – along with its fruits: pain, sorrow, illness, and death – to exist for a few millennia so that once the curse of sin is destroyed, it will never again be tolerated. This means that when God creates new worlds with new people, a billion years from now, the recorded drama that occurred on Earth will be available for study. Therefore, if anyone develops a problem with God's rules and thinks about sinning, He will do everything possible to dissuade His child from it. God will send, if need be, a billion ex-sinners to testify on his behalf; He will replay clips of Earth's ancient, painful history, showing what sin does. However, if that person persists and chooses to sin, God will execute that sinner on the very day he sins. The universe, having the knowledge of good and evil, will declare that God is just and righteous for doing so. Therefore, God wisely allowed the curse of sin to develop in Heaven and contaminate Earth to prevent a third instance of sin's curse from occurring again.

Many people do not understand that God has self-imposed limitations. For example, the greatest gift God gives to His children is free will and the power of choice. This gift is so important, wonderful, and precious that God Himself will not violate it! If a person wants to lie, he can do so; Lucifer lied to the angels and to Eve. If a person wants to kill another person; he can do so. Cain chose to kill Abel; the Jews chose to kill Jesus. This is free will! However, with free will and the power of choice comes accountability. Each person is accountable to God for his choices and actions. Therefore, in God's economy, if a person chooses to hurt another person, he sins against God (who has said "Love your neighbor") and commits an injustice

against his neighbor. Unless the sinner repents, God will legitimately put all predators to death at the appointed time, because the penalty for sin is death. If a predator willfully hurts another person, God will ensure that he suffers in hell according to suffering he caused – an eye for an eye and a life for a life.

The sinful nature is self-centered and predatory, and this curse is hereditary. Cain inherited his parent's fallen nature and, unfortunately, his sinful nature mastered him. Until God eliminates the curse of sin, its seeds (sorrow, suffering and death) will remain on Earth. When the time comes for justice to be served and the Earth is purified with fire, the curse of sin will disappear from the universe.

Jesus will permit the devil to kill a predetermined number of saints during the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 6:9-11) This may seem harsh, but Jesus does not see death as we do. Instead, He sees it as a temporary state like sleeping. (John 11:11-13) He has the power of life within Himself and He has the keys to the grave, so the first death (the consequence of sin) is not final. (Revelation 21:3-6) However, the penalty for sin (the second death) is final. (Revelation 21:8)

When circumstances are right, the blood of martyrs is the strongest testimony that human beings can give for the gospel of Jesus. Believers in Jesus are not suicide bombers, and they do not harm innocent people while shouting "God is Great." Martyrs for Jesus are amazing people who can say, as Jesus did, **"Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing!"** (Luke 23:34) Martyrs for Jesus are compassionate people who love God and seek His righteousness with all of their heart, mind, and soul, and they love their neighbors as themselves. Martyrs for Jesus are a living testimony to those who observe their deaths. When a wicked person sees a truly innocent victim willing to suffer prison or even death because of their loyalty to God, the victim's testimony can be transforming. (Revelation 12:11) The saints will reveal amazing endurance and strength during the Great Tribulation

because Jesus will give them grace and strength to overcome the world. Their testimony will shock the wicked! **“When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge.”** (Proverbs 14:32)

All who die in the Lord during the Great Tribulation will simply “sleep” through the remainder. (Revelation 14:13) At the Second Coming, the Lord will resurrect “the dead in Christ” to see Jesus appear in clouds of glory. (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17) In many ways, death during the Great Tribulation will be a blessed relief!

### **Controlling the Seven-Headed Beast**

**“The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.”** (Revelation 13:2) The devil will gain control of the seven-headed beast by giving it his power to deceive. The devil will give the seven-headed beast his throne and great authority over Earth which is more far reaching than people can conceive. Jesus called the devil “the prince of this world” (John 12:31) because the devil controls or influences everything. The devil is highly intelligent, clever, a master strategist, and far more capable than humans imagine. People controlled by the sinful nature rarely detect his activities, but people born of the Holy Spirit can clearly identify his presence and handiwork. The devil knows this! He gained control over the world in Noah’s day by leading people deeper into the excitement and pleasures of sin. Lucifer uses gratification to his advantage because it is so alluring to the sinful nature. The devil has ruined every government God set up since Noah’s flood; he ruined the nation of Israel, the Christian Church, and Protestantism. He controls every religious system on Earth through people who are his hand puppets. This is why a blasphemous name is written on each of the seven heads. (Revelation 13:1; 17:3) Given the devil’s amazing skills and lengthy experience with sinners, he will easily and swiftly take control of the seven-headed beast to persecute God’s people. In fact, I believe the devil is preparing, right now, the very people who will soon serve as leaders of the seven-headed beast!

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## King Herod

The devil uses sophisticated techniques to bring people under his control. He gained control of King Herod when, as a young man, the king chose wrong doing. Early on, King Herod was known for his ruthless brutality. Whenever a person willfully does wrong and violates his conscience, God requires the Holy Spirit to temporarily leave that person so that demons can assail him. God permits demons to insert their depraved thoughts into a sinners' mind the same way He permits the Holy Spirit to insert holy and good thoughts into the mind of a saint. When a person regularly chooses to do wrong, he gradually slips into a lifestyle of sin and there are physical, mental, and spiritual consequences. Demons understand the process very well and this is how they lead their victim deeper into wrong doing. After a while, the demons know their victim will have no sense of guilt, remorse, or right and wrong. The sinner becomes "dead" (or numb) to his life of sin. (Ephesians 2:1) When a person is separated from God, the Holy Spirit cannot speak to him. When the Holy Spirit stops speaking, demons take over.

When King Herod learned that wise men from the East had arrived and a child had been born in Bethlehem who would someday rule the nations with a scepter of iron, he became afraid that he could lose his throne. Herod panicked. Wicked people often become hypersensitive to any threat, real or imaginary. King Herod had power over life and death, and as sovereign, he moved to protect his authority. He had previously killed his second wife Mariamne I and their two sons. Therefore, he did *what the demons suggested he must do* to protect His throne. He commanded that all baby boys in Bethlehem who were less than two years old, be killed. What a horrific deed! Lucifer and Herod both contributed to Herod's actions. The devil wanted Baby Jesus dead and Herod wanted to protect his throne. Lucifer did not hesitate to move on Herod's heart to commit one of the most horrible crimes possible. Conversely, consider how the Lord moved on Cyrus' heart when the time came to release the Jews from Babylon

after seventy years: **“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, *the Lord moved the heart* of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing.”** (2 Chronicles 36:22, italics mine)

The devil did not anticipate the Father would send an angel to Joseph, telling him to flee to Egypt with Mary and Baby Jesus. Historians may recount Herod's despicable crime, but there is far more to the story than is revealed in the book of Matthew. Revelation 12 lifts the veil so that we can actually see Lucifer's predatory role. Lucifer was the Master of Ceremonies and Herod was his agent of death on the night that all the baby boys in Bethlehem were killed. Similarly, Lucifer will become the Master of Ceremonies after the seven-headed beast is created. The world's religious and political leaders will become his agents for punishment and death, just like Herod.

The devil understands Bible prophecy better than any human. Therefore, he has garbled apocalyptic prophecy with erroneous ideas so that no one will believe what the Bible actually says. The devil hates truth because it exposes his lies. He does not want people to know God's love, wonderful character, or redemptive plans. By keeping everyone in the dark, the devil knows that he can, literally, get away with murder. A window of opportunity lasting 42 months is coming (the creation of the seven-headed beast), so the devil is secretly working today on the religious and political leaders of the world. (2 Thessalonians 2:7) After the seven-headed beast appears, it will only take a few days for the devil to transform man's efforts to appease God into a hand-puppet to destroy the saints. Be on the lookout! The devil is keenly focused on making war against the saints! Many wicked people will be punished and put to death in the process, but the devil will regard their loss as collateral damage. **“He [the seven-headed beast] 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, insertion mine)

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## The First Message of the 144,000 – Fear God, Worship the Creator!

The 144,000 will deliver four profound messages during the Great Tribulation. Try and place yourself in this experience: The world's infrastructures have been destroyed by the first four trumpets and almost two billion people are dead or dying. Survivors are trembling, anticipating more judgments. The seven-headed beast is present and you are facing the enforcement of a number of its laws. You know that rebellion will bring severe punishment. This will be the context for the first message given by the 144,000. (Revelation 14:6,7)

The first message given by the 144,000 will be a simple, non-negotiable demand. It will be offensive and inflammatory for almost everyone, especially Babylon's leaders. The first message is so unusual that if given before the first four trumpets occur, most of the world's population would not receive it. For the past 2,000 years, Revelation 14:6,7 has had no relevance for non-Christians and very little relevance among Christians. This will abruptly change. The Holy Spirit will give the message impressive authority. The 144,000 will announce: **“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)

The phrase, “Fear God,” uses the Greek word, *phobeo*. Our English equivalent is the word, “phobia,” which indicates fearfulness or a state of remaining afraid. The 144,000 will begin their ministry declaring that the survivors should be afraid of God at a time when most people surely will! However, the fear the 144,000 will announce means *properly fearing God and recognizing His sovereign authority*. Jesus said, **“But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power [to resurrect you and] to throw you into Hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him.”** (Luke 12:5, insertion mine) God's laws are higher than man's laws and we should honor Him first. God is not bound by

man's laws, religions, or cultures. A sovereign God determines right and wrong. This is why the Bible says, **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge** [it is the first thing every person should learn], **but fools despise wisdom and discipline.**” (Proverbs 1:7, insertion mine)

The first message the 144,000 prophets give will insult and infuriate the clergy who direct the seven-headed beast (Babylon). The survivors will struggle with two divergent messages. Many people will oppose the demands of the seven-headed beast, many will oppose the message given by the 144,000, and others will reject both messages! As a result, three groups of people will emerge. The first group will be those who agree with the leadership of the seven-headed beast. Several billion people will play “follow the leader,” thinking at first, the experts are right. These people believe the beast's purpose and mission is appropriate and timely. The second group will be those who join the 144,000 who will openly oppose the seven-headed beast's efforts. This group of people would rather be persecuted than dishonor the higher authority of the Creator. Finally, there will be many people who oppose both the laws of the seven-headed beast and the testimony of Jesus, spoken by the 144,000. These people will have no inclination toward obeying religious laws. Each of the three groups will advocate totally different behaviors.

### The Nature of War

No one takes kindly to being told to change his behavior or else. Our sinful nature naturally rebels against uninvited and unwelcomed authority. Human beings have free will and power of choice, so it is aggravating when one person attempts to force his religious beliefs on another. Babylon's seven leaders will anticipate widespread rebellion. Therefore, to maintain control of the situation, they will immediately impose severe penalties for disobedience. They will demand that people comply with their laws because, in their thinking, everyone must participate in their effort to appease God. Like the high priest, Caiaphas,

they will argue, “God may destroy the whole world if a few rebels refuse to repent.” (John 11:50)

The 144,000 will respond with, **“Fear God and give Him glory.”** This means “Don’t be afraid of the leaders of the seven-headed beast, be afraid of God. Obey Him. Fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in Hell.” (Luke 12:5) The 144,000 will tell the world that the seven-headed beast is insulting God and that repentance and reformation will not appease God’s wrath. They also will contradict the seven-headed beast who says more judgments are coming!

The 144,000 will explain that if a person wants to give God glory, he must recognize God’s laws are higher than any earthly authority. When we put God first and do what is right and honorable in His sight, we are giving glory to our Creator. Obeying the laws of the seven-headed beast will not give God glory. In fact, obeying the seven-headed beast means worshipping the devil! “[When obeying the seven-headed beast] **Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, ‘Who is like the [seven-headed] beast? Who can make war against him [who can rebel without being severely punished]?’**” (Revelation 13:4, insertions mine)

The first message given by the 144,000 also includes this declaration: **“The hour of His judgment has come.”** This phrase means “Judgment Day” has begun. God will now judge the living according to their choices and actions. Jesus will save all who worship Him as God and give Him glory by obeying His laws. This will take a lot of courage and faith because of the beast’s persecution. When He appears at the Second Coming, Jesus will destroy those who refused to obey Him and live by faith. Many religious people think they are good people and salvation comes through human goodness, but the Bible teaches that people, good and bad, are saved through faith alone! **“By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.”** (Hebrews 11:31)

Finally, the 144,000 will declare: **“Worship Him who made the Heavens, the Earth, the sea and the springs of water.”** This segment of the first message will create a global uproar because the 144,000 will declare that Jesus Christ is the Creator! Since most of the world does not recognize Jesus as deity or the Creator, this message will distress many people. Nevertheless, the 144,000 will boldly declare to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people that the Father commands everyone to worship Jesus Christ because He is the Creator of everything that exists! **“He [Jesus Christ] was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. . . Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. . . For by Him all things were created: things in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him.”** (John 1:10; 1:3; Colossians 1:16, insertion mine)

Can you imagine the anger and hostility Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Atheists and heathens will have towards the 144,000's first message? When the 144,000 tell these ancient religious systems to worship Jesus Christ, the demand will be contrary to everything previously believed about God! The revelation that Jesus Christ is the deity, the Almighty God, the Sovereign Creator of Earth who has just destroyed **“the Heavens, the Earth, the sea and the springs of water”** will be an unexpected surprise. The announcement will be so inflammatory that if Jesus did not protect the 144,000, they would be killed within a few hours. The revelation of Jesus Christ, the revealing of all that Jesus really is, will crush the cherished beliefs of religious people around the world because it will require them to embrace a whole new God; a God previously scorned or even unknown. Billions of people will have to recognize that their lifelong religion is a false religion.

The first four trumpets will affect **“the Heavens, the Earth, the sea and the springs of water.”** One-third of the Earth

will burn in the first trumpet, an asteroid will impact the sea in the second trumpet, the springs of water will be contaminated in the third trumpet, and the Heavens will turn dark during the fourth trumpet. These signs and the first message given by the 144,000 will start a great controversy about which God is the Creator and who has sovereign power over Earth. Remember the falsity that mankind worships the same God, we just call Him by different names. The 144,000 will direct people to the Bible to confirm that Jesus Christ is Earth's Creator. The Holy Spirit will speak convincingly to the honest in heart, convicting them that the 144,000's message is true.

Because Catholics and Protestants already believe in Jesus Christ, their confrontation with worshiping the Creator will be just as intense, but in a different way. The 144,000 will declare the seventh day of the week, Saturday, is the Sabbath of the Creator, and that Jesus requires all mankind to rest on His holy Sabbath day. Catholics and Protestants will have the same anger and rejection that Hindus, Muslims and Jews experience when the 144,000 tell them they must worship Jesus Christ on His holy day! When it comes to God's laws, human nature is the same regardless of religion. **“The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.”** (Romans 8:7)

### **Worship the Creator**

The requirement to worship the Creator may seem to be easy but it is not, because *only* God can define true worship. Notice what happens in the story of Cain and Abel. Abel was a shepherd. (Genesis 4:2) He loved sheep. His wealth and livelihood depended on raising and caring for them. It was painful and expensive for him to sacrifice a perfect lamb on his altar. Yet, he put his emotions aside and did as God commanded: He built an altar periodically, confessed his sins over the head of the lamb, and then killed it. Abel worshiped God because he did as God required.

Cain, on the other hand, was a farmer, and it did not seem fair that he should have to purchase and offer an animal as a sacrifice. He worked in his fields tirelessly to produce the highest quality fruit possible. So, he too periodically built an altar and placed the fruits of his labor on it. Cain confessed his sins over his fruit, but in His presumption He insulted God. Cain put what he valued above God by deciding how God should be worshiped. This is why God refused to send fire to burn up his offering! Cain was humiliated in front of his family when God sent fire from Heaven and burned up his younger brother's offering. How could God ignore the offering of the firstborn of the human race? Later, a jealous and bitter Cain quarreled with Abel. When Abel told Cain that God would respect his offering if he did as God commanded, Cain became furious that his younger sibling would chide him, so Cain killed Abel for disrespecting him. *The first death on Earth was the result of a war over worship.*

### **The War over Worship Is Coming**

The war over worship began before Jesus created Earth. The devil came to hate Jesus because he wanted to be worshiped as Jesus was worshiped. Eventually, Lucifer and his followers refused to worship Jesus, and the Father cast them out of Heaven because He will not allow anyone to live in Heaven who refuses to worship Jesus as Almighty God! After the devil led Eve and Adam into sin, he became the prince of this world and made it a point to reject, denounce, and belittle the importance of Jesus for 6,000 years. The devil has infiltrated every religious system of the world and each one is in for a rude awakening: That Jesus Christ is Almighty God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the very God who sent the first four trumpets, the same God whom the seven-headed beast is actually trying to appease, will be a very difficult truth for billions of people to accept!

The Father has mandated that everyone, including the angels, must worship Jesus. (Hebrews 1:6-12) He has also defined how

and when Jesus is to be worshiped. If we follow Cain's example and worship God in a way we think best, Jesus will refuse our worship because we have defied the Father's authority. If you will recall, the definitions for the Greek word *worship* means to kiss, an act of submission, or yielding obedience. Therefore, those who obey the Father's command to worship Jesus will give Him glory through obedient faith. Any other worship than what the Father has declared may seem like worship but, do not be fooled, the story of Cain and Abel proves that Jesus will see the difference.

A war over worship is coming. I call it World War IV, because it will occur after World War III. The seven-headed beast will demand that God be worshiped according to men's laws, and the 144,000 will declare that God must be worshiped according to the fourth commandment. Because billions of people will oppose both demands, Jesus will use the fifth and sixth trumpets to force people to choose which god they will worship. The Bible teaches that before the forty-two months of persecution end, *all* the inhabitants of Earth will worship the seven-head beast (and the devil), except those people whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.



# Chapter 6

## Babylon's Blasphemy

### The Seven-Head Beast Is Also Called Babylon

Shortly after the horrific destruction caused by the first four trumpets, the religious and political leaders of the world will create a crisis government to appease God's wrath. This government is the seven-headed beast of Revelation 13:1. Among other names, the book of Revelation calls the beast "Babylon" for good reasons. Any attempt by mankind to appease "one God" will cause endless confusion, because this planet is religiously opposed and politically diverse.

Modern day Babylon will parallel the ancient story in the book of Genesis about the Tower of Babel. Remember, its builders had to quit because of confusion. They got off to a great start when, **"the whole world had one language and a common speech** [but they defied the Lord after He had promised that never again would He send a flood to destroy the Earth by building a city with a tall tower] . . . **So the Lord** [came down from Heaven and confused their language so that they could not understand each other. Then He] **scattered them from there over all the Earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel – because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world."** (Genesis 11:1,8,9, insertions mine)

There is another reason for calling the seven-headed beast, "Babylon." Several situations during the Great Tribulation will parallel events which occurred in ancient Babylon. For example, the king of ancient Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) commanded everyone to bow down and worship his golden image or be put to death. (Daniel 3:6) During the sixth trumpet, the king of modern Babylon (Lucifer) will also command everyone to worship the image he has set up or be put to death. (Revelation 13:14,15)

## The Religion of Babylon

The ancient Babylonians were deeply religious. Their religion was a mixture of superstition, astrology, Chaldean traditions, the occult, and revelations from their gods. Magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers conveniently “cooked up” these revelations when they were needed. (Daniel 2:2; Jeremiah 50:2) The Babylonians believed their god, Marduk (also called Bel), was the most-high god, superior to all the gods whom other nations worshiped. The notion that Marduk was superior was derived from Nebuchadnezzar’s amazing wealth and prosperity. His capital city, Babylon, had no equal in the ancient world and his military was believed to be unbeatable.

In ancient times, military prowess was more than a matter of ego. The ancients believed that repeated military victories proved that the god (or gods) of the victor was greater than the god (or gods) of the defeated. From its beginning as a nation, Israel believed this concept. Moses told Israel, **“When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. . . . *For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.*”** (Deuteronomy 20:1,4, italics mine)

About 600 B.C., Jesus gave the king of Babylon a disturbing vision. Nebuchadnezzar saw the image of a metal man. The image had a head of gold, chest of silver, thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. As the king gazed at the metal man, a stone came from the sky and destroyed it. When the king awoke he was disturbed because He sensed the dream was important but he could not recall it. Nebuchadnezzar was certain that Marduk had given him an important prophetic message.

Nebuchadnezzar summoned the experts: his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers. He had a simple request, “tell me the dream and its meaning.” The experts were

alarmed by the king's demand and he was infuriated by their response. They had to admit that his request was impossible. For years, King Nebuchadnezzar had relied on these men. They claimed to be intimately connected to Marduk, the great god of the Babylonians, and convinced Nebuchadnezzar that Marduk had revealed unknown things to them. Nebuchadnezzar had won many victories, just as they predicted, so He believed these "experts." However, their problem now was more complicated. They had to reveal what the dream was! They had to confess that they (and by extension, Marduk) could not reveal what was dreamed. The disillusioned king felt betrayed and bitter. Angrily, he ordered that all of Marduk's priests and prophets be put to death if they could not tell him the vision and its meaning.

After the king's confidence in Marduk and his religious experts had been shattered, Jesus revealed the vision of "the metal man" to a young Jewish captive. (Daniel 2:23) Daniel was about 20 years old when he was brought before King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel told the king there was a God in Heaven who reveals mysteries. Daniel did not speak disparagingly of Marduk or Babylon's clergy. Instead, he told the king "the Most High God" had revealed the dream so that the king could understand some of the plans of "the Most High God." The metal man represented six kingdoms that would follow in succession. Daniel explained that when the time came for the seventh kingdom, the God of Heaven would destroy everything that remained of the man-made kingdoms to establish His own eternal Empire.

Nebuchadnezzar was deeply moved because Daniel revealed every detail the king saw. The king stepped down from his throne and bowed before Daniel, a Jewish captive, because the king knew without doubt that Daniel's God was genuine. He was the Most High God! In his joy, the king did something that exasperated everyone in the king's administration; He elevated Daniel over the whole province of Babylon! If you understand the Babylonians despised the Jews, and Daniel was barely 20 years old, you can appreciate that the clergy of Marduk were

greatly incensed with Daniel's promotion. For them, to bow to a Jew (or the God of the Jews) and obey Daniel's future directives was outrageous.

During the months that followed Daniel's exaltation, the clergy of Babylon connived to eliminate him from his position. Since everyone in Babylon wanted to know why the king had promoted a "Jew," of all people, to the highest position over the province of Babylon, and everyone wanted to know about the king's dream, the clergy were delighted to repeat the vision and its meaning. They thought that if everyone knew about the dream it would motivate Nebuchadnezzar to remove Daniel from office. However, the clergy's efforts backfired.

The clergy knew that a monarchy can only exist for as long as people are loyal to the king. In ancient times, maintaining loyalty to a weak king was a recipe for death because arising kings typically destroyed everyone who reserved the slightest loyalty to the former king. Before long, Nebuchadnezzar's satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all of the other provincial officials, learned about the vision and its meaning. They did not know what they should do or to whom they should direct their loyalty. When Nebuchadnezzar learned of this vulnerability spreading throughout his empire, he had to move quickly to cover up the truth. He could not allow his subjects and administrators to think that Babylon would fall to another king!

### **A Golden Image Setup**

Nebuchadnezzar was clever. Since the contents of his dream had been widely told, the best thing he could do was to obfuscate the truth. In his dream, the metal man's head was made of gold, the chest silver, the thighs bronze, the legs iron, and the feet and toes of iron and clay; each metal represented succeeding empires. The king chose to change one detail hoping to convince his subjects to remain loyal. The king made a metal man entirely of gold! One golden man meant one golden empire, enduring forever!

Because thousands of administrators were involved, Nebuchadnezzar issued an order to erect a golden image that stood about ninety feet tall and nine feet wide! After the image was completed, the king called his administration together on the Plain of Dura. Thousands of men gathered. After much boasting about Babylon's victories, great prosperity, and military might (something like a state of the union address in the United States), King Nebuchadnezzar announced that when the music sounded everyone must bow down and worship the image to show loyalty to the king and his enduring kingdom. This, the king assumed, would resolve any questions about his dream and the future of Babylon. Moreover, it would isolate anyone who was not loyal. In the Babylonian culture, if someone showed any sign of disloyalty, people were encouraged to tattle on them, and if the information proved true, the king would richly reward the informer (something like corporate whistle-blowers or confidential informants). Nebuchadnezzar encouraged spying because every seed of rebellion had to be detected and terminated before it could affect the empire.

Three young Jews were in the crowd that day. Bible students believe that Nebuchadnezzar excused Daniel for obvious reasons, but given the time necessary to build the image and the many details involved with arranging the event, the king overlooked the presence of Daniel's three friends. When the moment came for everyone to bow down and worship the golden image, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego defied the king's order. Spies in the crowd hastily reported the three young men's defiance and the king summoned them to appear before him. The ceremony abruptly ended as thousands watched an even more interesting drama. The golden image was upstaged! The faithfulness of three young men who defied the great king of Babylon eclipsed the towering statue of the metal man.

Nebuchadnezzar was embarrassed and frustrated because he knew these young men. He knew that, like Daniel, they were upright and trustworthy servants. He generously offered the three Jews another chance to save face (and their lives), but they refused. The king of Babylon became furious, no one

would refuse his sovereign authority in public and live. He ordered the smelting furnace be made seven times hotter! With the furnace roaring and every eye watching, a startling event occurred!

First, the intense heat killed the soldiers who bound and threw the three young men into the furnace. The soldiers' deaths confirmed to every onlooker that an inferno was burning in the furnace. This fact would be needed in days ahead to keep anti-Jewish sentiment from changing the story. Then, as everyone watched, a fourth person suddenly appeared *inside the flames* standing with Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. When the king saw four men walking around in the furnace, the Holy Spirit came upon him; He realized the fourth person in the furnace was a "Son of the gods." In the presence of thousands of administrators who believed that Marduk was Most High God, the king called out, "servants of the Most High God come out." Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego walked out without injury or the smell of smoke in their clothing. Everyone was flummoxed. The God of the Jews had plainly shown Himself to be superior to Marduk. No god had ever done such a thing! While the golden image was supposed to be the object of awe and adoration that day, the story carried to the far-flung corners of the empire was the miracle inside the furnace.

### **Faith that Saves (Salvific Faith)**

Three young men demonstrated their faith in God. Salvific faith means obeying God, doing what is right in His sight and leaving the consequences with Him. Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego believed God when He said that bowing down to idols was wrong; and when Nebuchadnezzar commanded them to worship the golden image, they chose to do right in God's sight and leave the consequences with Him. At Mt. Sinai the Lord proclaimed: **"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in Heaven above or on the Earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the**

**fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”**

(Exodus 20:4-6) When man's laws conflict with God's laws, faith means obeying God rather than men! Centuries later, Peter and the apostles would say to the Jewish leaders who were persecuting them, **“We must obey God rather than men!”** (Acts 5:29)

Once we understand the story of Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, we can better grasp the coming war over worship. The 144,000 will proclaim the testimony of Jesus, which is everyone must worship the Creator, Jesus Christ, on His holy seventh day Sabbath; the basis for this demand is found in the Ten Commandments. Meanwhile, the seven-headed beast will make a series of demands regarding worship and will punish everyone who chooses to disobey. (2 Timothy 3:12; John 16:1-4) The good news is that every saint who obeys the gospel and suffers for Christ will be blessed by Jesus' presence within the furnace.

After the Antichrist appears (the devil and his angels will physically appear at the fifth trumpet) the world will be forced to worship an “image” which the devil will set up. All who refuse are to be killed. **“Because of the signs** [and miracles] **he** [the devil, the modern king of Babylon] **was given power to do on behalf of the first beast** [that is, miracles done on behalf of the seven-headed beast], **he** [Lucifer, the Antichrist] **deceived the inhabitants of the Earth** [into thinking that he really is Almighty God]. [When his deception is widespread] **He** [the Antichrist] **ordered them** [the inhabitants of Earth] **to set up an image in honor of the** [seven-headed] **beast who** [had a head that] **was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He** [the Antichrist] **was given power to give breath** [life, authority, power] **to the image of the first beast** [the seven-headed beast], **so that it could speak** [make laws] **and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.”** (Revelation 13:14,15, insertions mine)

At this point, we have not discussed the coming Antichrist (modern king of Babylon) or the image of the beast which he will set up. Even if you do not understand these matters, you can easily gather from the text that some beastly authority will impose a death decree upon all who refuse to *worship the image that he sets up*.

### **Parallels between Ancient Babylon and the Babylon to Come**

The book of Revelation sometimes refers to the seven-headed beast as “Babylon.” This title is used for several good reasons! First, after Noah’s flood, God considered the construction of the tower of Babel to be an act of defiance; so, He ended the project with confusion by suddenly making the builders appear to “babble,” that is, speak different languages. When the seven-headed beast is formed, it will be totally confused. We are a world of many languages, religions, cultures, and politics, and this diversity will plague the seven-headed beast with endless babble.

Second, because of the Babylonians amazing prosperity and military achievements, they believed their god, Marduk, was the Most High God, superior to all other gods. When the Great Tribulation begins, the religious leaders of the world will be compelled by circumstances to admit there is one angry God, even though he is worshiped and called by different titles. This convenient falsity will simplify the mission of the seven-headed beast, which is to appease God’s wrath so that His judgments will cease. This situation will play into the hands of the 144,000 who will deliver the testimony of Jesus! The “gottcha” will be a contest over worship. Will people bow down and worship the *imaginary* god of the seven-headed beast (represented as the imaginary god, Marduk) or will they worship the God of the 144,000 (the living God who walked in the furnace with Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego)?

Finally, the story about the fiery furnace parallels an end-time event. A time is coming when everyone on Earth who refuses to worship “the image” established by the modern king of Babylon

(the Antichrist) will be killed. Because of these three parallels, the book of Revelation sometimes refers to the seven-headed beast as “Babylon.” For example, **“A second angel followed and said, ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great [meaning, the seven-headed beast is advocating lies and blaspheming the Creator with insults, there is no truth in its claims], which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.’”** (Revelation 14:8)

### Full Cup Principle

Another key parallel between ancient and modern Babylon merits attention. While the ancient kingdom of Babylon was in its prime, God revealed to Jeremiah that He would destroy the empire because of its sin and guilt. (Jeremiah 25:12) About 60 years later, God’s patience ran out. During a great party celebrating Marduk, the “Most High God of the Babylonians,” King Belshazzar insulted the God of Heaven with insolence and blasphemy. Belshazzar instructed his servants to retrieve the sacred vessels Nebuchadnezzar took from God’s temple in Jerusalem. He did this to elevate Marduk in the eyes of his nobles. Thinking there would be no consequence, Belshazzar wanted to show contempt for the God of the despicable Jews.

Belshazzar had a problem. Nebuchadnezzar exalted the God of Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego when they came out of the fiery furnace; and later, before he died, Nebuchadnezzar again said the God of the Jews was above *all other gods*. (Daniel 4:34-37) Belshazzar wanted to erase the memory of Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion and confession. It was a matter of national honor and religious pride. Belshazzar’s servants delivered the golden vessels, and the king ordered the vessels filled with alcohol and served to his guests. This was an outrageous act of blasphemy because no alcohol was permitted the sacred vessels. When the king, along with a thousand nobles, lifted his hand in a toast to the great god of Babylon, another hand was also lifted; this hand wrote a cryptic message on a large wall so that everyone could see it, but no one could read or explain the message. The toast was forgotten and after

some awkward silence, Belshazzar summoned Daniel (who was an old man) to explain the handwriting on the wall.

He said to Belshazzar, **“You have set yourself up against the Lord of Heaven. You had the goblets from His temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways. Therefore He sent the hand that wrote the inscription. . . God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. . . You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. . . Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain.”** (Daniel 5:23-28,30) That night, the prophecy God gave Jeremiah sixty years earlier was fulfilled.

This story will have a parallel with modern Babylon. A day is coming when the king of modern Babylon (Lucifer, the devil, the Antichrist) will set himself up against the Lord of Heaven and convince many, with his miracles and promises, that his theocracy will last forever. For a few months it will appear that the devil and his kingdom are invincible, but the God of Heaven has numbered Lucifer's days. The kingdom established by the Antichrist will surely come to its end, but not by human power. (Daniel 8:25) A Divine Destroyer will abolish it in a single day.

The prophetic sequence given to Nebuchadnezzar 26 centuries ago (the vision of the metal man) is still unfolding. A day is coming when Jesus (the rock cut out of the mountain) will destroy the whole world at His appointed time. Jesus is the Rock that will destroy the kingdoms of men. His appearing at the Second Coming will be overpowering and frightening! Because of the bold and unflinching ministry of the 144,000 prior to the great day of the Lord, everyone will anticipate His arrival. When they see Him, the wicked will frantically run for

cover. **“Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the peoples of the Earth will mourn because of Him. So shall it be! Amen.”** (Revelation 1:7)

### **The 144,000’s Second Message: Babylon Has Fallen**

When Jesus steps into mankind’s affairs during World War III, everyone on Earth will realize that something extraordinary has occurred. There will be awesome signs in the Heavens and all over the Earth; a global earthquake will follow which will destroy much of the world’s infrastructures. Life on Earth will dramatically change. The 144,000 will begin their ministry on that day. I call this day, “Day 1” because there will be 1,334 days to follow.

I anticipate world leaders will create the seven-headed beast 30 to 60 days after the global earthquake. I believe the seven-headed beast will begin to function during the darkness caused by ejecta from many volcanoes during the fourth trumpet. The seven-headed beast will move quickly to outlaw any behaviors that religious leaders determine offensive to God. Because the nations will be governed by martial law, law enforcement personnel will essentially become “religious police.” They will brutally do their jobs, enforcing Babylon’s laws and persecuting those who do not comply.

Babylon’s leaders will require God be worshipped. Muslim dominated countries will enforce laws regarding worship on Friday. Israel will implement laws regarding Saturday worship. Catholic and Protestant countries will enforce laws regarding the sacredness of Sunday. The seven-headed beast will dictate that businesses cannot operate on days reserved for worship. It will force nations, which do not have a traditional holy day each week, (Hindus, Buddhists, Communists, and tribal nations) to set aside a day of the week to worship God. Of course, after some of the dust settles and fear wears off, many people will rebel against the religious demands imposed by the seven-headed beast. When Babylon’s authority is challenged, the furnace of persecution will be made seven times hotter. The

leaders of Babylon will meet each challenge to its authority with stiffer penalties.

Circumstances created by such a hostile atmosphere will divide people into three groups. Many people will comply with Babylon's laws because they are sheep-like followers. Their religious leaders and experts endorsed the formation, purpose, laws, and mission of Babylon so the followers accept Babylon without question. This group will avoid persecution because they will do whatever Babylon's leaders want. A second group of people will resist Babylon's laws because they refuse to be controlled by religious laws or religious authorities. Nothing is more galling and detestable than to have one man force his religious views upon another. Communists and atheists will comprise a large segment of this group. A third group of people will also defy the laws of Babylon, but for moral and spiritual reasons. This group of people will consist of people who love and worship Jesus on the Sabbath and follow His testimony which the 144,000 share.

The differences between rebels will not deter Babylon's leaders. Babylon will not care whether a person disobeys its laws for religious or nonreligious reasons. Anyone who disobeys its laws, for whatever reason, must be severely punished or "God's wrath will surely continue!"

When Babylon begins to persecute people for refusing to obey its laws, the 144,000 will add a second message to their proclamation ("Worship the Creator"). When these two messages are combined, the people of Earth will be further alienated and polarized. The 144,000 will say, **"Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great** [meaning, the seven-headed beast is advocating lies and blaspheming the Creator with insults, there is no truth in its claims], **which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."** (Revelation 14:8)

### Life in Babylon

During Israel's 70 years in Babylonian captivity, Jewish families multiplied. Some families experienced the birth of

three generations! Many young Jewish people intermarried with the Babylonians and embraced the Babylonian religion. When the 70 years of Jewish captivity ended, many Jews born and raised in Babylon did not want to return to Jerusalem. Babylon was their life, religion, culture, and language. Moreover, Jerusalem was a heap of ruins and Judea was a lawless desert overrun by warlords and squatters. Therefore, many of the Babylon-born Jews did not want to give up the abundance of Babylon and their jobs. For them, it made no sense to leave home and live in deplorable conditions 700 miles away.

Of course, God knew this situation would develop when He placed the Jews in Babylonian exile; He gave this warning through the prophet Jeremiah long before Babylon would fall to the Medes and Persians: **“Flee from Babylon! Run for your lives! Do not be destroyed because of her sins. It is time for the Lord’s vengeance; He will pay her what she deserves. Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord’s hand; she made the whole Earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad. Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken. Wail over her!”** (Jeremiah 51:6-8)

Jeremiah’s message to the Jews in ancient Babylon has a very interesting parallel with which the second message given by the 144,000, requires a decision. Consider my paraphrase: The 144,000 will say words to the effect, “Flee from modern Babylon, separate yourself from it and run for your lives. Do not join Babylon and be destroyed because of its sins. Babylon is comprised of seven false religions and its mission is a false endeavor. Babylon’s leaders have blasphemed and insulted the Creator. Jesus will repay modern Babylon double for every crime. (Revelation 18:6)

The seven-headed beast was a gold cup in the Lord’s hand at one time (meaning, it was valuable and important to Him). He brought about circumstances so that mankind would create the seven-headed beast. The Lord did this to bring the religious

and political leaders of the world together in one accord and to simultaneously expose all religious systems of the world as false. The maddening wine of Babylon is the doctrine that *mankind can appease God's wrath so that His judgments will end*. This is a lie. God's wrath cannot be appeased; a total of fourteen plagues will occur! Moreover, God will not accept forced repentance or worship. Babylon's laws are an insult to the Creator! The religious systems of the world are fallen and corrupt. People who drink in Babylon's wine cannot worship God in spirit and truth. The leaders of Babylon do not know God's character, purposes, or plans. Even though Babylon will appear to be great and powerful, God promises it will surely fall after forty-two months. All who remain loyal to Babylon will wail over its destruction and their own doom. Have nothing to do with the seven-headed beast! Run for your life!"

### A Painful Awakening

The Father will fulfill several objectives during the Great Tribulation. One objective is to reveal Jesus Christ as the Creator of everything in the Universe. Another revelation is that Jesus is an Almighty God just like the Father. Another revelation is that all the religions of the world are false and corrupt. Another purpose is to separate the sheep from the goats. The Father will meet all of these objectives through a war over worship. Even though we cannot currently see this development, the subject of worship will soon become an inflammatory matter. Jesus will speak through the 144,000 and those who love truth will embrace it. Those who love religion, family, culture, and possessions more than Jesus, will reject the truth. **"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life [by compromise] will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."** (Matthew 10:37-39, insertion mine) Paul wrote about the wicked saying, **"They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."** (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

The number of people who will abandon their cherished beliefs about God after He has revealed His truth remains unknown. From a human point of view, we could say that Noah did something foolish when he built the ark because it had never rained. We could say that Abraham did something foolish when he left home not knowing where he was going. Again, we could say that Abraham did something foolish when he attempted to sacrifice Isaac on Mt. Moriah. We could say that Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego did something foolish when they boldly defied King Nebuchadnezzar. The list goes on because responding to God's voice appears foolish to those who cannot hear it. (1 Corinthians 2:14) This simple fact will have enormous ramifications in days to come.

During the Great Tribulation, Jesus will require each person to abandon his religious heritage. Jesus wants Muslims to renounce Islam; Catholics to renounce Catholicism; Hindus and Buddhists to renounce Eastern Mysticism; and Atheists and Protestants to renounce their religious beliefs. This is because most people do not realize their religion is their God! This is fascinating. . . *Only those who live by faith will obey God when He requires an action that is outside the boundaries of religion.* When Jesus calls everyone to come out of Babylon, He will demonstrate to the universe that there are people within every religious system who live by faith. They will respond to His call even when it appears totally foolish to everyone else!

Remember, Jesus will begin judging the living after the first global earthquake (Day 1). The Father has predetermined the judgment process will follow this process: Each person will be given an opportunity to hear the testimony of Jesus and a period of time during which he will have to make a decision about whether or not to obey the gospel. If the person decides to obey, his faith will be tested by persecution. All who pass the test of faith will be sealed (sinful nature removed). All people who stand firm in their faith will be made heirs of the promises God given to Abraham. Yes, all Israel will be saved! (Romans 11:26)

The first message given by the 144,000 will be inflammatory. Religious people will be enraged when they are told that Jesus is the Creator and Savior of the world, and that He demands worship on his holy seventh day Sabbath. The second message given by the 144,000 will be appalling. Many religious people will refuse to separate themselves from their religious systems, even though they know their religious system is blasphemous in God's sight! Separating those who follow the Spirit from those who cling to their religion is a difficult process. Nevertheless, an innumerable host of people will receive the gospel of Jesus and through faith, be saved! (Revelation 7:9-17)

Long ago, Jesus made an interesting statement that will have peculiar importance during the Great Tribulation: **“The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the Heavens and the Earth, and on the seventh day He abstained from work and rested.”** (Exodus 31:16,17) The Sabbath will become a sign between Jesus and everyone who walks by faith. Faithless people will not be able to keep the Sabbath because they will not be able to withstand the persecution that goes with it. The devil will do everything possible to keep people from honoring the Creator's holy day. This is why Jesus said, **“He who overcomes [the sinful nature] will inherit all this [the new Earth], and I will be his God and he will be my son. 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 21:7,8, insertions mine) Satan and his followers will punish the saints who keep God's Sabbath, but Jesus will walk in the furnace of persecution with each of His children. **“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:20)

When the time arrives, the first two messages that the 144,000 give will be easy to understand. Each person who loves God

with all his heart knows the voice of the Holy Spirit. All who love truth will eventually discover that the seven-headed beast is an evil monster representing the seven false religions of the world. They will see that Babylon's mission and purpose is false and the nations intoxicated with religious and political ideas insult God. Finally, when religious and political leaders commit adultery (form an adulterous union, getting in bed together), millions of honest hearted people will flee Babylon and escape its doom.



# Chapter 7

## Antichrist and Mark of the Beast

### John Saw the Devil and His Demons Released

For centuries, people have speculated on the identity of the Antichrist. The Bible reveals who the Antichrist is, but the truth is almost unbelievable! The Antichrist is the devil. At the fifth trumpet, God will permit the devil and his demonic angels to appear physically all over Earth. John saw the physical appearing of the devil: **“The fifth angel** [one of the seven angels that stand before God, Revelation 8:2] **sounded his trumpet, and I** [John] **saw a star** [a term used in the book of Revelation to describe angels (Revelation 1:20), a brilliant being] **that** [had been cast out of Heaven, he] **had fallen from the sky to the Earth.** [At the appointed time] **The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss** [The ancients believed the Abyss (bottomless pit) was a mysterious region located beneath a flat Earth. The ancients believed a bottomless shaft (hole) went through the flat Earth to the Abyss which was a dwelling place for demons. Volcanoes served as chimneys for the fires that burned under the Earth. The star that had fallen from the sky is Lucifer whom God cast out of Heaven because of his rebellion. John saw the angel king of the Abyss (Lucifer), given a key so that he and his demons could escape. This language indicates that Jesus deliberately and precisely controls the timing when the devil and his demons can physically appear]. **When he** [the devil] **opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it** [a great cloud of angels appeared in the sky, the cloud was so dense that it looked] **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** [billions of angels with powerful wings, the number of them was so great that at a distance, John could only compare them to a giant swarm of locusts] **came down**

**upon the Earth and were given power** [from God to hurt certain people, the torture they caused was] **like that of scorpions of the Earth.**

**They** [the demons] **were told not to harm the grass of the Earth or any plant** [crops] **or tree** [God does not permit them to physically destroy anything], **but *only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.*** **They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man.** [The torture was so great that] **During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.**

**The locusts** [the demons from the Abyss] **looked like** [well-armed] **horses prepared for battle. On their heads they** [the demons] **wore something like crowns of gold** [showing their authority over mankind], **and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was** [long] **like women's hair, and their teeth were** [deadly, powerful] **like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron** [they were invincible beings, human beings could not stop, injure, or kill them], **and the sound of their wings was** [very loud, they had intimidating power] **like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss,** [the star who received the key] **whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.** [For the Jew and the Gentile, his title means the same: The Destroyer.] **The first woe** [first curse on the wicked] **is past; two other woes** [curses] **are yet to come** [upon them]." (Revelation 9:1-12, insertions and italics mine)

The physical appearing of the devil with billions of demons at the fifth trumpet is a prophetic development that few people anticipate. Jesus revealed the appearing of the Antichrist

to John using a caricature of Lucifer and his demons in the same way that He used the caricature of a seven-headed beast in Revelation 13:1 to represent a crisis government. If you remember, the seven-headed beast *looked like* a leopard, but it had feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion. These features are metaphors that describe Babylon's swift and ferocious power. The idea is that Babylon will quickly destroy everyone who resists its laws. This is why people will lament when the time comes, "Who is like the [seven-headed] beast? Who can make war against him?" (Revelation 13:4)

Lucifer and his demons will not physically look like the locusts having scorpion tails and riding on horses. These are also metaphors. The devil and his angels will be brilliant, glorious beings with a human-like appearance because angels were made in God's image like mankind. (Genesis 1:26; Job 38:7 KJV) The demons from the Abyss will be physically larger and much more powerful than mankind, and they will be able to fly! Men will not be able to control, stop, or kill them. When the fifth trumpet sounds, Jesus will release the devil and his demons from the Abyss. They will be given power to rule over the whole world for about fourteen months.

Jesus is very patient. He only releases the devil and his demons from the spirit realm after the whole world has had time to thoughtfully consider the testimony of the 144,000. Remember, after a period of about two and a half years, three groups of people will exist. The first group consists of the saints who love and follow Jesus; the second group consists of the religious wicked who obey the laws of Babylon to avoid persecution; and finally, there is a third group that consists of non-religious wicked who refuse to obey either God's laws or Babylon's laws.

After the devil and his angels appear his demons will focus their attention on the third group, the nonreligious group. The demons will not attack those who are willing to worship the devil; and God does not allow the demons to attack the saints who have God's seal. Therefore, the demons will search for

people who refuse to worship the devil as Almighty God. When they find these people, they will torture them until they make a decision. If a person surrenders to the demons, agreeing to obey and worship the devil, his torture will end. If he chooses to worship Jesus and receive God's seal, his torture will also end, but only temporarily.

Coercion is not God's way. A God of love will not accept forced repentance or a forced conversion; albeit, many genuine conversions have happened in foxholes and other difficult circumstances. Sometimes people will make a genuine and lasting decision when they realize their desperate need for a Savior! (Acts 16:30; Luke 23:42) Because we are created as beings with free will, God only accepts the submission and worship of a person who freely chooses to love Him and obey His commandments. (John 14:15) This will sound strange until you think it through: God allows the devil to torture "hard-headed and hard-hearted" people who have not firmly reached a decision about worshiping anyone so that, if possible, some will repent of their defiance and receive salvation!

The nonreligious group will choose between two options . . . obey and worship the devil to end the torment, OR, in faith, obey and worship Jesus the Creator by resting on His Sabbath day. Once a person makes his decision, his torment will end because demons are not permitted to harm anyone who has God's seal! Of course, the demons will threaten those who choose to worship Jesus, telling them that while they can escape torture for the present, they will be dealt with later. Most of the people in the nonreligious group will acquiesce and worship the devil to avoid further torture. The sinful nature is eager to avoid the consequences for doing wrong. Salvific faith, on the other hand, is eager to do what is right in God's sight, trusting that God will be glorified through the consequences.

Jesus will not permit the devil to put people to death during the fifth trumpet, but during the sixth trumpet this restriction is removed. Jesus will allow the devil to put many saints to death as martyrs. Most of the people who surrendered to Jesus

during the torture of the fifth trumpet will be martyred during this time because they will refuse the mark of the beast! The demons will surely seek them out.

### Monster Size Demons

When the devil appears, masquerading as Almighty God, each wicked person will be confronted with Lucifer's "mighty power and sovereign authority." Standing about fifteen feet tall\* and deceptively cloaked in brilliant light and charming benevolence, the devil will claim to be "Almighty God." He will literally call fire down out of the sky to validate his many lies. (Revelation 13:13) The devil will declare that he has come to establish God's kingdom on Earth. He will "admonish" everyone to join him so that there can be a thousand years of peace and prosperity. Of course, everything he predicts about the future will be a lie, and this is why the book of Revelation calls the devil "the false prophet."

Paul described the appearing of the devil and his demons: **"The coming of the lawless one** [the devil is called "the lawless one" because he will not show any respect for any laws other than his own. His wishes and whims will immediately become law and even though he will appear to be a glorious being, he is a demon masquerading as Almighty God. His actions] **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.**

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**\*Note:** I speculate the devil will be fifteen feet tall because there were giants before the flood (Genesis 6:4) and centuries later, Goliath was over nine feet tall. (1 Samuel 17:4) Since mankind was created as "smaller" or "shorter" beings than angels (Psalm 8:3-5), it is reasonable to say that Lucifer and his angels will be taller. When the temple was built, God gave Solomon instructions to create two "life sized" angels for the Most Holy Place and they were fifteen feet tall. (1 Kings 6:23-26.)

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 2:9-12, insertions and italics mine)

Paul said, **“For this reason God sends the wicked a powerful delusion.”** The reason is **“Because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”** A person cannot refuse to love the truth and be saved until he has first heard the truth and had time to process its requirements! When a person refuses to obey God’s will after the clearest evidence of God’s will is put before him, God can do nothing further for such a person because God will not violate a person’s free will. Before Earth was created, God cast Lucifer and his followers out of Heaven because they refused to obey God’s commands. When Jesus releases the devil and his demons from the spirit realm (the Abyss), Lucifer’s demons will seek out and confront those people who refuse to worship any God. For five months Lucifer’s demons will torture anyone who refuses to worship the devil. The price for insubordination will be painful.

### **The 144,000 Will Proclaim a Third Message**

When the fifth trumpet occurs, the 144,000 will add a third message to their gospel: **“If anyone worships the beast** [the God-like beast] **and his image** [the image which the devil will set up] **and receives his mark** [a tattoo] **on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of His wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.”** (Revelation 14:9,10, insertions mine)

The timing, identity, and mission of the Antichrist and his demons are explained throughout the Bible. For two thousand years, God has hidden these details in plain sight because the information is only applicable to the final generation. Thus far, we have investigated the fifth trumpet. (Revelation 9:1-11)Now,

we need to investigate Revelation 13:11-18 because it reveals more about the Antichrist!

If you remember, the seven-headed beast in Revelation 13:1 came up out of a sea. There is a second beast in Revelation 13:11, that comes up out of the Earth. These beasts are separate and distinct. The seven-headed beast initially derives its power from the people of Earth (the sea represents peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages – Revelation 17:15). However, the beast that comes up out of the Earth (Abyss) does not need humanity to give it power! The beast coming up from the Earth is the angel Lucifer whom God cast into the Earth on Resurrection Sunday. (Revelation 12:9, KJV) Historically, I have called this beast the “lamb-like beast,” but I now think he should be called the “God-like beast.”\* This new title is

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**\*Note:** Paul said the man of lawlessness “**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.**” (2 Thessalonians 2:4) Think about this: If the devil appears on Earth as Jesus Christ, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus would not be inclined to receive or worship him. However, if from the beginning of the Great Tribulation, the religious leaders of the world convince their followers that there is only one God called by different titles, the stage is set for the devil’s deception! When the devil appears on Earth claiming to be “Almighty God,” the religious systems of the world will be ready to receive him because he is one God, having different titles! He does not favor any particular religious system or theology. Notice this specification: Paul said the devil “will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped” and this language has to include the Christian God, Jesus Christ. Therefore, I have had to modify my thinking and I now call the second beast in Revelation 13, “the God-like beast.” This is a subtle, but important update.

more appropriate because the devil will travel about the world masquerading as Almighty God. John *does not* describe the beast coming up from the Earth other than to say that it had two horns like *the* Lamb, but it spoke like *the* dragon. These two clues are enough to determine who the beast actually is!

John saw Jesus represented as a Lamb in Revelation 5 and noticed that Jesus had seven horns (representing all power) and seven eyes (all seeing) in that scene. (Revelation 5:6) With this in mind, consider John's report in Revelation 13:11 and onward: **"Then I saw another beast, coming out of the Earth** [actually, he came up out of the Abyss where he had been confined]. **He had two horns** [he will exercise authority over religion and politics] **like a** [the] **Lamb** [John doesn't actually say, "like a lamb" in the Greek text. The indefinite article "a" is supplied by translators, but they should have used the definite article "the." The Greek language sometimes uses nouns without an article when referring to a previously identified subject. John saw *the* Lamb of God in Revelation 5:6 and He had seven horns. In Revelation 13:11 John saw a beast that had two horns like [*the*] **Lamb, but he spoke like a** [the] **dragon** [again, John did not include the indefinite article in the Greek text. The text should read "but he spoke like *the* dragon." Prior to Revelation 13, John saw the great red dragon in chapter 12, and the beast in Revelation 13 speaks like *the* dragon because he is the great red dragon!]. . . **And he** [the God-like beast, an impostor of Almighty God] **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** [the seven-headed beast], **he deceived the inhabitants of the Earth** [into thinking that he was indeed, Almighty God]. [After the five months allotted to the fifth trumpet, the angel having the sixth trumpet sounded his trumpet and the devil was given authority to kill his adversaries.] **He ordered them** [his worshipers] **to set up an image** [this image will be a one-world church/state, a theocracy, a likeness of the chaotic church/

state created by the leaders of Babylon. The Antichrist will claim he was doing this] **in honor of the [seven-headed] beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He [the Antichrist] was given power [from God] to give breath to the image** [so that his one-world church/state exercised even greater authority than that] **of the first beast, so that it [e.g., the devil's government] could speak [with absolute authority] and cause all who refused to [obey its laws and] worship the image to be killed.**" (Revelation 13:11,13-15 insertions mine)

When the sixth trumpet sounds, the devil will abruptly change persona and character because God will permit him to kill a third of mankind. Moving quickly and masquerading as Almighty God, he will demand that a theocracy be formed. Obviously, there can be no room for religious diversity or multiple governments on Earth when God Himself lives among men! Lucifer will set himself up as King of kings (Head of State) and Lord of lords (Head of Religion) and no human can stop him. He will demand that anyone who refuses to obey and worship the image (his counterfeit theocracy) to be killed. The devil will then abolish and outlaw the world's religions and governments to make his dominion complete and, in the process, his forces will kill about two billion people who resist. I estimate the death toll will be two billion people assuming the population of the world is six billion at that time!

During the sixth trumpet, the devil will make sure there will be one faith, one Lord, and one baptism on Earth. The 144,000 will counter this global development by announcing a third message that will be highly inflammatory: **"If anyone worships the [God-like] beast and [obeys] his image [his government] and receives his mark [a tattoo] on the forehead or on the [right] hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb."** (Revelation 14:9,10, insertions mine)

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### The Mark of the Beast

If a person wishes to properly understand the mark of the beast, he has to understand a few prerequisites. For example, he needs to appreciate the primitive conditions throughout the Earth caused by the devastation of the first four trumpets (electrical grids will be in ruins and travel, transportation, and communication will be very limited). Then, he also needs to understand the glorious arrival of the Antichrist with his demons and their efforts to deceive the world into thinking that Lucifer is Almighty God. Finally, he needs to understand the devil's cruel move to take control of the world. Lucifer will kill one third of mankind and human beings will be unable to stop him.

To set up his theocracy, the devil (the Antichrist, the God-like beast, the beast from the abyss) will abolish the religions and governments of the world. He will then divide the world into ten segments and establish a "puppet" king over each segment as a taskmaster. The devil will commission these kings with a fake project to "build God's kingdom on Earth." He will demand that everyone must work on "building up the kingdom" by resorting to an ancient and primitive method for dealing with large numbers of people. (Exodus 18:24-26; Numbers 31:48-54; Deuteronomy 1:15; 1 Samuel 22:7; 1 Chronicles 27:1) He will require the ten kings to divide their subjects into groups of one thousand. One person will be chosen from each group to serve as captain. Each captain will announce that the first 666 people willing to receive a "666" tattoo on the right hand can live. All others must be put to death. This is how and when one-third of mankind will be killed. (Revelation 9:15) (999 people minus 333 people equals 666 people.) This gruesome tactic will work because it will expose and eliminate those who have the slightest reservation about worshiping the devil and obeying his laws. Those who rush to be included with the first 666 will be rewarded with their lives.

The phrase "the mark of the beast" is a popular, but poor, translation from the Greek language. The phrase should be

translated, “the engraving of the beast.” The Greek word *charagma* is translated “mark” in English, but it means an engraving, such as an engraving on a tombstone or an engraving in the flesh. A branding or tattoo fits this definition. A tattoo is a simple, low tech, easy way to manage people in large numbers. Hitler tattooed millions of prisoners during the primitive conditions of World War II and the devil will do the same. A tattoo is not subject to theft or counterfeiting and it is not reversible or transferable. A person must display a tattoo showing “666” on his right hand to conduct business (what little buying and selling will be possible). Given the dire circumstances on Earth at the time of the sixth trumpet, it is easy to understand how the devil will be able to control people at that time.

The devil will be delighted to kill a third of mankind because his cruelty and ruthlessness will intimidate the survivors. Everyone will tremble at the authority and power of the “stern-faced king” (Daniel 8:23) when they realize that he has absolute control over life and death. Each person who receives the devil’s tattoo will be reminded that he can only live as long as he worships and obeys his demonic master/monster! The devil has no compassion and love for human beings. He thrives on pleasure derived from torturing and destroying his subjects. His depth of twisted evil and cruel hatred for the Father and everything Jesus has created is impossible for humans to comprehend.

### **The 144,000 Proclaim Their Fourth and Final Message**

To save themselves from death, billions of wicked people will scramble to receive the dreaded “mark of the beast,” which will be tattooed on the right hand. Tattoos have been used since ancient times to mark slaves, and everyone receiving the tattoo will literally become a slave by *choice*. Life is precious . . . Life is everything . . . or is it? When it comes to doing evil, can evil be justified or is faith in God required? The book of Revelation holds a profound lesson: *When people reach a point where they*

*value life more than standing up for righteousness, the Creator of life determines such people are unfit for life!* To demonstrate this lesson, Jesus will permit the devil to kill millions of His saints during the sixth trumpet. These martyrs will choose death rather than knowingly do evil. (Revelation 12:11) This is the profound difference between sheep and goats.

Those who serve as captains and officials in the devil's theocracy will receive the 666 tattoo on their right hand, but they will also receive a tattoo on their foreheads to show their superior rank in the devil's government. The tattoo on the forehead will be a name that the devil will declare after he physically appears (Revelation 13:17); a blatant counterfeit of what God intends to do for His servants. The Bible says the 144,000 will wear the names of the Father and Jesus on their foreheads after they go to Heaven. (Revelation 14:1; 22:4)

When the mark of the beast is offered, the 144,000 will give their final message to the world and it will cost most of them, if not all, their lives. **“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the Earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the Earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries. . . Come out of her, 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. Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup. Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself.”** (Revelation 18:2-7)

The Bible describes Lucifer's theocracy in Revelation 17 as a great prostitute, riding on (directing) the seven-headed beast. This caricature indicates that everyone who goes along with the

mark of the beast is essentially a prostitute. A prostitute is a person without morals or virtue; someone willing to exchange his or her soul for gain even when they know doing so is wrong. When the devil offers the mark of the beast, billions of people who refused to love truth, who refused to trust and obey Jesus, will knowingly and willingly sell their souls and bodies to the devil to survive, but their survival will be short lived.

### **The Seventh Trumpet**

The rush to be counted among the first 666 people to receive the mark of the beast will complete the separation of the sheep from the goats. The saints will have God's seal and the wicked will have the mark of the beast. After each person has made the choice of whom he will worship, Jesus will pronounce a solemn benediction. His gracious offer of salvation which began the day Adam and Eve sinned will end. Jesus will say, **"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) Three and one-half days after this benediction, the seventh trumpet will sound. **"Then God's temple in Heaven was opened, and within His temple was seen the Ark of His Covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm."** (Revelation 11:19) After God's offer of salvation has ended and the seventh trumpet sounds, the final curse (third woe) will begin. This curse is the seven bowls containing God's wrath Jesus will use to impose crushing vengeance on the wicked. As King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He will repay the wicked for their rebellion and for the way they mistreated His saints. An angel will say of Jesus, **"You are just in these judgments, You who are and who were, the Holy One, because You have so judged."** (Revelation 16:5)

### **Jesus Will Not Touch Earth**

The Second Coming occurs during the seventh bowl. Many Christians have not carefully considered Jesus' words: **"In my**

Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going *there* [Heaven] to prepare a place for you. And if I go [to Heaven] and prepare a place for you, I will come back [to Earth] and take you to be with me that you also may be [in Heaven] where I am [I live now]." (John 14:2,3 insertions and italics mine) The words of Jesus are particularly important because you need to know that Jesus will not touch Earth at the Second Coming. Instead, when Jesus returns, He will hover in the sky so that every eye will see Him as Earth rotates beneath. (Revelation 1:7) Jesus will not remain here when He returns at the Second Coming. This is why the saints will be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) Jesus and the saints will leave Earth and travel to Heaven where they will live together in His Father's house, the holy city called New Jerusalem, for 1,000 years.

# Chapter 8

## Seven Bowls

The Bible indicates the seven bowls, also called the seven last plagues, will begin on the day following the seventh trumpet. I anticipate the seven bowls will last for 70 days, possibly ten days per bowl. Jesus and the Father will appear in billowing clouds of glory and flashes of lightning during the seventh bowl. (Matthew 26:64; Revelation 6:16,17) The armies of Earth will attempt to destroy Jesus as He draws near to Earth, but Jesus will speak and all of Lucifer's government officials will be thrown into a lake of fire. Jesus will speak a second time and the rest of the wicked will drop dead. The book of Revelation represents Jesus' power to kill people through speech alone as a sword that comes out of His mouth. (Revelation 19:15-21) These seven *last* plagues are God's vengeance on the wicked for defiant rebellion and the cruel treatment they imposed on His saints. (Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30) Graciously, the righteous will be untouched. (Daniel 12:1)

Consider the punishment that comes with each bowl (Revelation 16):

**Bowl 1:** Jesus will make festering boils develop on everyone having the mark of the beast. (Biblical parallel, see Exodus 9:8-11, Deuteronomy 28:35.)

**Bowl 2:** Jesus will turn the oceans to blood and everything in them will die. The oceans will no longer provide seafood. Imagine the horrific stench. Hundreds of millions of wicked people will die from disease or starvation. (Biblical parallel, see Exodus 7:15-21)

**Bowl 3:** Jesus will turn the springs and rivers to blood. Many wicked people, especially those who participated in the saints' martyrdom, will suffer and die from thirst.

**Bowl 4:** The Sun will scorch wicked people with searing heat and many will die.

**Bowl 5:** Jesus will strike all the people who work for the devil's government with painful blindness. Their eyes will rot in their sockets, their tongues will rot in their mouths, and their flesh will rot on their bones causing excruciating pain. (Biblical parallel, see Zechariah 14:12.) Millions will die. This plague will unmask the devil who claims to be "Almighty God." The wicked will realize that Lucifer is a fake; he cannot stop the plagues or the destruction of his government! The wicked will have to admit that the 144,000 were correct in saying that the glorious being masquerading as the Almighty was the devil, the father of liars, the false prophet. This bowl is very important for the saints because it ends the forty-two months allotted for persecution. When Satan's government is destroyed, there will be no one hunting or persecuting the saints.

**Bowl 6:** Even after his government is destroyed, the devil is not finished with his rebellion. When the sixth bowl occurs, the ten kings will clearly know the devil's true identity. Knowing this, the devil will send his three most powerful demons to visit the kings. The demons will implore the kings to join with the devil in waging war against Jesus when he appears. The demons will perform great miracles and argue that it will be the kings' last and only chance to save themselves from death. The Bible predicts the ten kings will go along with the devil to save their own lives. They will activate their armies to destroy the Creator of Heaven and Earth when He appears!

**Bowl 7:** Armageddon will be a fatal war for the enemies of Jesus. The armies of the Earth will use whatever weapons they have to assault Jesus and the Father, but their efforts will do nothing. As Jesus draws closer, He will speak and the wicked will die. Afterwards, He will resurrect the saints; and together with the living saints (a few saints will remain alive through the Great Tribulation) they will ascend to Heaven on Day 1,335. (Daniel 12:12,13)

The seven last plagues will not affect those having God's seal. The angel said to Daniel: **"But at that time your people --**

**everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered.” (Daniel 12:1) “A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.” (Psalm 91:7,8)**

### **Armageddon - The Battle of the End**

A lot of confusion exists about Armageddon. This battle will occur during the seventh bowl (the final ten days of Earth's history). The word, Armageddon, comes from two Greek words that are joined together, “*har megiddon*” and they are transliterated into the word, “Armageddon.” The two words mean “Mount Megiddo” or the “mountain of Megiddo.” When John received the vision that makes up the book of Revelation, the ancient city of Megiddo (located about 19 miles from modern Haifa in northern Israel today) was well known for its ruins. For centuries, the city had been a landmark in Israel. At one time, Megiddo had been a proud and prosperous city sitting on a mountain top. Because of its location it had a natural defense. However, in 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar reduced it to ruins and it was never rebuilt. It was common knowledge in Israel that Pharaoh Neco's forces killed King Josiah in a battle near Mount Megiddo. The Lord told Josiah to avoid Pharaoh, but Josiah went out to fight a battle that should not have been fought and it cost him his life. (2 Chronicles 35)

The battle of Armageddon is neither concerned with a physical location in the Middle East, as many people suspect, nor will it be a mystic or spiritual battle. The battle is called Armageddon because God wants us to learn three lessons from the ruins of “Mount Megiddo.” First, Armageddon will be a battle that should not be fought! Earthly kings and their armies will knowingly and willingly join forces with the devil and his demons to foolishly make war against the King of Kings, and they will suffer the same fate as King Josiah. Second, the battle of Armageddon will leave the whole world in ruins the same way that Nebuchadnezzar's armies left Mount Megiddo in total ruins. Third, when Armageddon ends, Earth will remain desolate

for one thousand years in the same way that Mount Meggido remained desolate for centuries! The prophet Zephaniah wrote about the great Day of the Lord saying, **“Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord’s wrath. In the fire of His jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for He will make a sudden end of all who live in the Earth.”** (Zephaniah 1:18)

### God’s Purposes for Armageddon

After the fifth bowl occurs and the kings of Earth realize that they were duped into believing that Lucifer was Almighty God, the ten kings will agree to join forces with the devil and his demons to save themselves from death. If you think it farfetched that men and angels would war against God, remember Jesus on the cross and the war in Heaven between Lucifer and Michael. (Revelation 12:7-9) These wars reveal that when the sinful nature is confronted with God’s will, it would rather kill God (if possible) than to obey and worship Him! This is what the curse of sin does to every sinner and why the Great Tribulation will consist of a war over worship!

Armageddon will be an interesting war between the Creator and those He created, the very people who borrow life from Him! When we consider this battle to destroy Jesus and consider the cross and God’s efforts to save sinners, Armageddon reveals why God has to completely eliminate sin and those who love it from the universe. The curse of sin is a predatory virus from which there is no recovery except through the “born again” experience. If a person exercises his free will and refuses to listen to the Holy Spirit, refuses to be born again or worship his Creator, Jesus must protect the universe from such people by destroying them. Earth’s history proves there is enmity between the children of the woman and the serpent. (Genesis 3:15) When sinners controlled by the sinful nature are allowed to live, they always prey on the weak or the righteous. The children of the serpent persecute the sons of God just as Cain killed Abel. The enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman is endless.

# Chapter 9

## Ark of His Covenant

Chapter 7 focused on the fifth and sixth trumpets (the physical appearing of the Antichrist and the establishment of Lucifer's theocracy, including the mark of the beast). Chapter 8 focused on the seven bowls ending with the battle of Armageddon and the destruction of all of the wicked at the Second Coming. Now that you have an overview of these topics, we need to backtrack a little to discuss a very important development that happens when the seventh trumpet sounds (Day 1,264).

When the seventh trumpet sounds, **“Then God’s temple in Heaven was opened [His temple in Heaven was exposed to the people on Earth], and within His temple was seen the Ark of His Covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.”** (Revelation 11:19, insertions mine)

By now, you should be aware that God’s temple is located in Heaven and the physical events (the flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunders, earthquake and hailstorm) that occur at the seventh trumpet are the *same* physical phenomena that occur at the beginning of the seven trumpets. (Revelation 8:5-7) These *same* physical phenomena occur again at the end of the seven bowls! (Revelation 16:18-21) Jesus will use the *same* display of divine power to start the seven trumpets, to start the seven bowls, and to end the Great Tribulation. Each display will come with increased ferocity. In fact, Jesus will move every mountain and island out of its place during His final display of sovereign authority. (Revelation 16:17-21)

When the seventh trumpet sounds, the sky will open as a scroll and everyone will see *God’s temple* in Heaven! Each person will also notice a small golden box called the “Ark of His Covenant”

and the two groups of people viewing this scene from Earth will have opposite reactions.

The saints will be thrilled to see the Ark of His Covenant because its physical presence in Heaven's temple is a token of a promise that Jesus made long ago. When Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus promised a day would come when He would remove the sinful nature from His children and write His laws in their hearts and minds. (Genesis 3:15; Deuteronomy 30:5,6; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 11:19,20; 36:26,27; Hebrews 8:10-12) The importance, beauty, and value of this promise belong to those who desperately want to overcome their sinful nature. The curse of sin keeps us from doing the things we want to do, and doing the things we do not want to do. (Romans 7:14-25) When Jesus reveals the Ark of His Covenant, He will replace the sinful nature of each saint with the seal of the living God! Each saint will know that Jesus has fulfilled His promise! For them, the Ark of His Covenant represents God's enduring faithfulness, His amazing grace, His eternal truth, and unfathomable love.

The wicked, on the other hand, will stand in awe and tremble. They will stare at the glorious temple in Heaven and correctly sense this spectacular event is an omen of punishment to come; in fact, the seven bowls will begin the following day. As the wicked gaze on the Ark of His Covenant, they will remember the freshly tattooed number, "666" showing on their right hand and recall the four inflammatory messages given by the 144,000. They will understand their guilt is on their own heads because the 144,000 spoke often and boldly about the importance of the Creator's Ten Commandments. No one will dismiss, ignore, or mock the "higher" authority of God's law on this day. The wicked will feel every ounce of their guilt's damning weight.

### A Third Temple?

Paul said the man of lawlessness will **"set himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."** (2 Thessalonians 2:4) Many people read Paul's words and

conclude that a third temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem before the Second Coming, because, they reason, “God’s temple” must exist before the Antichrist can set himself up in it. These ideas are naïve and misguided.

There will not be a third temple. Jesus will not permit the Jews to rebuild the temple; Jesus told the Jews before He left Earth that their temple was left to them “desolate.” (Matthew 23:38,39) This means that Jesus (who is the God of the Old Testament – Isaiah 44:6; Revelation 1:17,18) would never again enter a man-made temple. He would serve in Heaven’s temple only. (Hebrews 8:2)

To ensure that a temple honoring Jehovah would never be rebuilt on Temple Mount, Jesus gave the site over to the Muslims who built the Al-Aqsa Mosque and a shrine called “The Dome of the Rock” about A.D. 700. It has been under Muslim control since A.D. 1187. Given the importance of this site and these buildings to 1.5 billion Muslims, there is no possibility that a Jewish temple will be rebuilt on Temple Mount. More importantly, even if the Jews did manage to build a third temple on Temple Mount, it would not be God’s temple! The Bible plainly teaches that Jesus serves in the true temple of God which is now located in Heaven. (Hebrews 8:1-5) This is why Jesus will show the true temple and the Ark of His Covenant to the world at the seventh trumpet! (Revelation 11:19)

The following phrase also leads many people astray, Paul wrote, “He [the man of lawlessness] **sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.**” This phrase should be understood theologically, not literally, because God’s temple is not on Earth. When the devil (the man of lawlessness) appears, he will claim to be Almighty God and perform amazing miracles to support his deception. Theologically speaking, “he will set himself up in God’s temple” by demanding and receiving worship that belongs only to God. To gain the honor and worship that belongs only to deity, the devil will perform awesome acts of deception for five months.

(Revelation 13:13,14; 9:5) When the five months are over, at the sixth trumpet the devil will suddenly change character and become a ruthless and diabolical dictator. He will abolish the religions and governments of the world to set up a one-world church/state. This government will serve as the devil's theocracy. He will rule the world with sovereign authority as King of kings and Lord of lords. This development is the ultimate pressure put on wicked people who still have free will. He wants the wicked to wake up and see the devil's true character, observe the many harsh and impossible demands which the devil will make, repent of their rebellion, and be saved. Speaking through the 144,000, Jesus will tell the wicked that a God of love does not do such things! The struggle between Christ and Satan over souls during the sixth trumpet will be intense. Can you imagine the demonic hilarity and revelry that will go on when the devil meets with his demons behind closed doors to discuss their many successes?

### **A Promise Is Embedded in the Ten Commandments**

About three months after the Exodus, Jesus descended on Mt. Sinai. He fashioned two tablets of stone and wrote the Ten Commandments on them with His finger. (Exodus 31:18; 32:15,16) Jesus did not create these commandments at Mt. Sinai because they and the two laws upon which they are based (Matthew 22:37-40) are from everlasting to everlasting. (Psalm 119:160) Jesus then called Moses to climb up the mountain so He could give Moses the tablets. After spending forty days and nights with God, Moses descended the mountain. As he neared the camp, he heard a commotion and saw thousands of Israelites dancing around a golden calf. Moses was overwhelmed, then became furious and righteously indignant. He had just been in God's holy presence for forty days and Israel's apostasy was more than Moses could bear. How could Abraham's descendants, whom God had just delivered from centuries of slavery with mighty miracles, do such a thing in God's presence? In frustration, He threw down the tablets and they shattered. It is ironic that the Israelites broke the law with idolatry but Moses destroyed the tablets out of righteous anger.

Later, the Lord commanded Moses to fashion two tablets of stone and bring them *up* the mountain so that He could rewrite the words that were on the first tablets. Given that Moses was eighty years old, I imagine the weight of the tablets was a physical reminder that God's law is a weighty matter. Once again, **“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) Notice, the Ten Commandments are called “the covenant.” Do you know why?

Jesus spoke the Ten Commandments to Adam and Eve after they sinned. (Hosea 6:6,7; Romans 5:12) Prior to Adam and Eve's sin, the Ten Commandments were written in their hearts and minds and they *naturally* did everything written in the law. There was no need for the Ten Commandments to be written in Eden. No one questioned the law in the same way no one questions the natural law of gravity. Until Adam and Eve sinned, they were in perfect harmony with God and His Ten Commandments.

Years later, the Bible says that Enoch and Noah “walked with God.” We can be sure that Jesus explained the Ten Commandments to them because the patriarchs were responsible for passing the knowledge of God, His laws, statutes, and ordinances to their descendants. (Deuteronomy 4:9) Over time, subsequent generations ignored this spiritual responsibility and the patriarchs allowed their sinful natures to lead them “into lusting after the flesh.” (Genesis 6:1-3; Romans 8:14; 1 John 2:16,17) Within a mere ten generations, humanity largely forgot the Ten Commandments so evil flourished. Violence and sexual immorality became so great that Jesus destroyed the world with a flood in Noah's day. (Genesis 6:5)

About one thousand years after the flood, Jesus took those same laws that had once been within Adam and Eve's hearts and turned them into a promise (a covenant). Many people do not understand this promise. Jesus promised Adam and Eve that one day He would restore them and all of their faithful

descendants to the sinless state they once enjoyed. He promised to restore His laws in the hearts of all who would live by faith. Those who died without receiving the fulfillment of this promise will receive it (the covenant) at their resurrection. For those who live during the Great Tribulation, Jesus will fulfill the covenant by removing the sinful nature *after* they pass a test of faith. This test includes accepting and obeying the fourth commandment and being persecuted for doing so. When there is a price to pay for obedience, faith in God is tested. Remember the fiery furnace test that Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego faced.

When God's laws are written in our hearts and minds, we will naturally want to do the things written in the Ten Commandments just as Adam and Eve did before they sinned. (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:10-12; Romans 7 & 8) However, for as long as the sinful nature is within us, we will do what it wants on occasion. (Romans 7:9-25; 8:5-12) Therefore, Jesus made the Ten Commandments a covenant, a promise that He would fulfill near the end of the age.

The Ten Commandments were always kept out of sight, secreted in the Most Holy Place of the temple. Other than Moses and those people who saw him descend Mt. Sinai, very few people have actually seen the Ten Commandments. Normally, the High Priest was the only person who ever came physically close to the Ten Commandments unless the Ark was being moved. On occasion when Israel traveled, the priests covered the Ark with the temple veil and the Ark led the way as the nation followed about one-half mile behind it. (Joshua 3:4) Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place, but even on that holy day, God did not permit the high priest to look inside the golden Ark of the Covenant.

God kept the Ten Commandments out of sight because He wanted to display the Ten Commandments (which represent His character and ways) through the lives of His people! God wanted a nation who loved advancing truth, a nation

energized by fresh experiences in faith. God wanted a nation who respected His laws as infallible guides to happiness and nobility of character. God also kept the Ark and the Ten Commandments out of sight because He did not want Israel honoring or worshiping sacred relics or idols. In fact, the second commandment forbids sacred pictures, images, and statues. (Exodus 20:4-6) God did not want His people to become legalistic and arrogant, thinking that they were superior to other nations because they had possession of a holy relic or special knowledge. Through the ages, God sent His prophets to Israel to keep the nation on track, but Israel killed most of them. The sinful nature hates divine correction! God wanted Israel to worship and love Him with all its heart, mind, and soul, and to love their neighbors as themselves. (Matthew 22:37-40) God wanted Israel to be a special kingdom of people on Earth where Heaven's rules were applied; a kingdom where the trustees of His gospel genuinely loved God and one another as the angels in Heaven love God and one another. Unfortunately, Israel rejected many opportunities to be God's special people on Earth and God's patience finally ran out.

### **The Ten Commandments Are Universal**

God gave the Ten Commandments *through* Israel to all people in the same way He gave Jesus *through* Israel for all sinners. The Ten Commandments contain a promise to those who will receive the Holy Spirit and a curse for those who reject it. If we allow the Holy Spirit to awaken our spiritual nature and show us our need of a Savior, if we allow the Spirit to create the new birth experience within us, the Spirit will give us a strong desire to overcome the sinful nature so that we can live in harmony with God's laws. If we refuse the Holy Spirit and allow our sinful nature to rule over us, we may enjoy sin's pleasures for a while, but the Ten Commandments will condemn us as sinners, and the penalty for sin is death. (Romans 6:23) It is ironic that the Ten Commandments are a law for some people and a promise for others. Our relationship with the Holy Spirit determines the difference.

God knows that the devil tempts well-intentioned sinners into thinking that living a legally righteous life leads to salvation, but such a relationship with the Ten Commandments is toxic. Obeying the Ten Commandments cannot produce eternal life. Each sinner needs a Savior because no sinner can save himself. Instead, salvation comes through faith. Salvific faith means doing what is right in God's sight and leaving the consequences with Him.

Faith in God starts with a humble attitude – a willingness to go, to be and to do all that God requires. (Proverbs 6:16-24; Matthew 5-7) This attitude produces good fruit. (Matthew 7:17-20; Galatians 5:22,23) At God's appointed time, He will justify those who live by faith! (Romans 3:28; Hebrews 11:6) Prior to Paul's conversion, he had a toxic relationship with God's law. (Philippians 3:4-6) Many Christians today suffer from the same relationship. This may sound strange, but many Christians actually suffer from a toxic relationship with God's grace!

When Paul discovered the Ten Commandments were spiritual in nature and that his sinful nature was religiously oriented (Romans 7 & 8), his relationship with God and his perception of God's law dramatically changed. Paul went from pursuing righteousness through obedience to the law, to pursuing salvation through faith in God and loving his neighbors as himself. His love for and faith in Jesus empowered Paul to suffer often at the hands of Israel's leaders. He was able to leave legalism and Judaism behind when he learned that God justifies those who live by faith. Many Christians do not read enough of Paul's writings to understand his thoughts. They read a short passage and come to the erroneous conclusion that Paul was opposed to obeying the Ten Commandments. This was not the case. After Paul's conversion, he was opposed to obeying God's laws *as a means to salvation*. Paul stressed in his writings that a person must follow the Holy Spirit and when the Spirit convicts a person to do something, he must obey regardless of the price! This is the essence of living by faith. Of course, the Spirit of God will never lead a person to violate God's laws. God is so generous. Millions of people have

lived and died and the Holy Spirit did not reveal or give them any particular conviction about the first four commandments! Therefore, these people have no guilt in God's sight. God winked at their ignorance. (Acts 17:30,31) However, when the time comes for "present truth" to be proclaimed and new light is announced from God's Word, God will hold everyone accountable according to his response to the Holy Spirit. There is a world of difference between obeying God's laws to be saved (that is, rewarded) and obeying God's laws because the Holy Spirit within you has convicted you to do so (regardless of the consequences)!

Paul discovered that faith in God means surrender to God's will in a spiritual sense, first, and in a physical sense, second. If a person does not steal because the law says not to steal, this is legalism. If a person does not steal because he loves his neighbor as himself, the motive comes from love and this is the intent of the law. If a person keeps the seventh day Sabbath holy because the law demands it, this is legalism. If he keeps the seventh day Sabbath holy (even when persecuted for his faith) because he wants to keep the Sabbath out of love for God, his motive is love and God is pleased. Such a person's Sabbath rest experience is wonderful. When situations arise and we are tempted to disobey God to avoid embarrassment or loss, this is when our motives reveal whether we are legalists or led by the Spirit. Again, the Bible is clear. Keeping the law cannot produce salvation. Obeying the Holy Spirit's voice and doing right in God's sight, without regard for the consequences, is the road to salvation and unfortunately few find it. (Matthew 7:13)

### **Is the Ark on Earth or in Heaven?**

Some Bible scholars believe that between 605 and 586 B.C, a group of priests at Jeremiah's bidding hid the Ark of the Covenant to keep it safe from the advancing Babylonians. It is fair to say that currently, no one knows where Jeremiah hid the Ark (the GPS coordinates have not been published). People have made claims and written books purporting to know the location of the Ark, but I think they are fake. I believe the

original Ark of the Covenant, built by Bezalel at the base of Mt. Sinai, is not on Earth. The Father took the Ark to Heaven after Jesus ascended because services in Heaven's temple require the Ark of His Covenant. (Hebrews 9:24)

Please consider the following thoughts concerning the location of the Ark:

1. During the Great Tribulation, people will be unable to travel because of badly damaged roads, dams, and bridges. Fuel for travel will be scarce or non-existent. People will be unable to communicate due to inoperable power grids, cell towers, radios, television, internet, and limited electricity. This isolation will separate people and nations into small geographic areas. There would be no purpose to reveal the Ark in or near Jerusalem during the Great Tribulation when very few people would hear about it and even fewer would get to see it. Revelation 11:19 predicts God will deliberately show the Ark from the sky at the seventh trumpet so that everyone on Earth will see it! A local discovery would not fulfill such a divine objective.
2. If someone finds the Ark of the Covenant on Earth prior to the Great Tribulation, it would be a sensational find, gaining worldwide attention for a few days. However, an archaeological discovery would not have the spiritual significance that goes with the display of the Ark at the seventh trumpet. The Ark would be considered a religious relic which belongs to the Jews. They would take possession and immediately hide it from view; the way it was hidden during Bible times. Additionally, if someone finds the Ark before the Great Tribulation begins, it would have no moral or spiritual importance for most of the seven billion people on Earth. This is because most of mankind does not recognize God's Ten Commandments as God's will. In fact, most Christians consider the Ten Commandments to be part of the Jewish religion in the same way a black stone mounted into the Kaaba's wall in Mecca is considered part of the Muslim religion.

3. If the Ark of the Covenant is found prior to the Great Tribulation and no one is killed when touching it (as Uzzah was – 1 Chronicles 13:10), this would assure everyone that the Ark is no longer holy and God's consuming power no longer rests on it. Many Christians would use this outcome to prove that the Ten Commandments were abolished at the cross. According to 1 Kings 8:9, the only items in the Ark at the time of Solomon were the two stone tablets. If the Ten Commandments were abolished at the cross, God would have no reason to show an empty box to everyone at the seventh trumpet.
4. In Bible times, the only people permitted to touch the poles attached to the Ark were Kohath's descendants. Before the Ark could be moved, the high priest had to cover it because they were not even permitted to look at it! (Numbers 4:15; 3:31) If someone finds the Ark on Earth prior to the Great Tribulation, who could look at it and move or handle it? If God's consuming power no longer defends the laws which He wrote with His own finger, the stone tablets would be of interest only to archaeologists. They would study the tablets, not for what they declare, but as samples of God's handwriting.
5. God could have easily removed the Ark from Earth in the same way that He removed Enoch and Elijah. There will be a war over worship during the seven trumpets. Therefore, God will show the Ark of His Covenant at the end of the war to vindicate the faith of His saints; to condemn the wicked for refusing to believe His Word; and so everyone can see that His laws are eternal and higher than all others. Earth indeed is His footstool. (Isaiah 66:1)

It is interesting to note that Jesus will not show the Ten Commandments at the seventh trumpet. I believe this is because they are spiritual laws. (Romans 7:14) God's laws only make sense to those led by the Spirit! (1 Corinthians 2:14) Jesus promised long ago that He will write His laws in the minds and hearts of those led by the Holy Spirit.

(Hebrews 8:10; Romans 8:14) Jesus will complete this process during the Great Tribulation when He removes the sinful nature of each person after he passes his test of faith. If, during the Great Tribulation, a person wants to see what the Ten Commandments look like, he can study the lives of the 144,000 and those who have been sealed! When the wicked see the Ark of His Covenant in Heaven's temple, anxiety will torment them similar to the night when a hand wrote on the wall at Belshazzar's feast. (Daniel 5:5,6)

6. Jesus will mark the completion of the judgment of the living and the close of salvation when He displays the temple in Heaven. (2 Corinthians 5:10) He will also show the Ark because it represents the covenant/law He used to judge mankind. This is intentional because Jesus will not destroy the wicked arbitrarily. The seven bowls that follow the temple display in Heaven will be legitimate judgments on the wicked because they willingly and knowingly rejected the clearest evidences of God's will. They defiantly refused to obey His laws, and unjustly persecuted and deliberately hurt His innocent saints during the Great Tribulation. God's wrath against the wicked is declared righteous in Revelation 16:5 when an observing angel says, **“You are just in these judgments, You who are and who were, the Holy One, because You have so judged.”**
7. Finally, some people claim the Ark used in the Earthly temple was a copy of the Ark used in the Heavenly temple. I cannot accept this claim because Jesus wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone provided by Moses. These tablets were then placed in the Ark of the Covenant which Bezalel made. (Deuteronomy 10:4) This means the Ten Commandments in Bezalel's Ark are originals, not copies. If the original Ark with the Ten Commandments is still hidden on Earth, revealing a different Ark of the Covenant from Heaven during the Great Tribulation would be far less significant and impressive. I believe the Father took Bezalel's Ark to Heaven after Jesus ascended because the Ten Commandments in Bezalel's Ark will endure as

a testimony for all eternity. This explains why the Ark of the Covenant is called, “The Ark of the Testimony” sixteen times in the Old Testament! (Exodus 25:16) There is one Testimony declaring God’s laws and one set of originals.

These seven points summarize why I believe the Ark in Heaven’s temple is the only Ark that has ever existed. If my conviction is true, this explains, in part, why God adorned this one article of furniture when it was on Earth with brilliant light – His consuming Shekinah presence.

### **Was the Sabbath Created At Mt. Sinai?**

Many Christians casually agree that the Ten Commandments are important and we should live according to them. However, when pushed to acknowledge the requirements of the fourth commandment they suddenly change position saying, the Ten Commandments were abolished at the cross. Observing God’s seventh day Sabbath rest creates a problem because those who keep it face all kinds of headwinds. Resting on God’s Sabbath is out-of-step and contrary to the ways of the world. Most Christians believe it is still a sin to steal, commit murder, commit adultery, worship idols, and take the Lord’s name in vain, but they will not admit that it is a sin to break the fourth commandment. They have not studied the Sabbath issue and are surprised to learn that God made the seventh day holy long before He gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. Jesus did not suddenly make the seventh day holy at Mt. Sinai; He made it holy Creation week! **“Thus the Heavens and the Earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done.”** (Genesis 2:1-3)

### **God’s Sabbath Rest was Renewed Prior to the Exodus**

Some people argue there is no record of anyone keeping the Sabbath before Mt. Sinai, but this is false. God’s Sabbath

rest became a test of faith for Israel prior to Mt. Sinai! About 2,500 years after Creation Week, the Lord sent Moses to Egypt with this message to Israel's elders: *If the Israelites want to be delivered from slavery, the Lord commands the Israelites to take a three-day trip into the desert to meet with Him. Friday will be used for travel, Sabbath will be used for worship and rest, and Sunday will be used for the return trip. During this festival, the nation of Israel must corporately recognize and worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob on His holy Sabbath day and offer atonement sacrifices as the Lord requires. After this festival, the Israelites must cease working on the Lord's Sabbath.* The Bible does not explicitly state this message, but I believe there is sufficient evidence to uncover the details. Consider these five passages:

1. **"Afterward** [after informing the elders of Israel of the Lord's commands and after considerable speculation among the elders about Pharaoh's reaction to the Lord's commands, and after getting their agreement to proceed] **Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert."' Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go.' Then they said, 'The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, or He may strike us with plagues or with the sword.'**" (Exodus 5:1-3, insertion mine)
2. Even though Pharaoh would not permit the Jews to take the three-day journey, the Israelites stopped working on God's Sabbath. When Pharaoh learned of this, he summoned Moses and Aaron to his court. He said, **"Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work! Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working."** (Exodus 5:4,5)

3. When the Israelites stopped working on God's Sabbath, they challenged Pharaoh's sovereign authority. Slaves are not permitted to dictate anything to their owners, including their work days or working hours! From an economic point of view, Pharaoh did not want to kill or lose his slaves. Rebellion always comes with a price, both to the rulers and the resistance. Therefore, to regain control over the situation, Pharaoh chose to increase the use of torture. Pain can humble rebellious people. Pharaoh continued to purchase straw from Egyptian farmers, but he no longer required the farmers to deliver the straw as before. Instead, the Israelites would be forced to go into the fields and gather straw, and Pharaoh made it perfectly clear they would have to produce the same number of bricks as before. **"The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, 'Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw.' The Israelite foremen appointed by Pharaoh's slave drivers were beaten and were asked, 'Why didn't you meet your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?'"** (Exodus 5:13,14)
4. Week after week, the torture went on. Some of the Israelite foremen appealed to Pharaoh to stop the harsh treatment saying, **" 'Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, 'Make bricks!' Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people.' Pharaoh said, 'Lazy, that's what you are - lazy! That is why you keep saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.''"** (Exodus 5:16-17)
5. **"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 [condemn] 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, insertion mine)

If you understand that Jesus is changeless (Malachi 3:6) and that He made the seventh day holy during Creation Week (Genesis 2:1-3), the elements in this story are easy to discern. The Children of Israel had to honor God's holy day by resting from their labor. Having faith in God (doing what is right in God's sight without regard for the consequences) was required for deliverance from slavery! Jesus tested the Israelites to see if they would obey Him. When a person is willing to suffer for what he believes is God's will, the Bible declares that person "lives by faith." (Romans 1:17) God tested the faith of Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace because they believed the second commandment forbade worshiping idols. God tested the whole nation of Israel when He required them to quit making bricks on His seventh-day Sabbath. Although Exodus 5 does not explicitly state there was a dispute between Pharaoh and Israel over God's Sabbath, there is no other logical explanation why this conflict arose.

I find it interesting how the Exodus story parallels the Great Tribulation although the events are thousands of years apart.

1. As a condition for deliverance from the bondage of sin (the removal of the sinful nature and receiving God's seal), God will require the people of Earth to keep the Lord's Day (Saturday, the seventh day of the week) holy during the Great Tribulation. The 144,000 will proclaim this condition in the first message they deliver. **"The hour of His judgment has come. Worship Him who made the Heavens, the Earth, the sea and the springs of water [on His seventh day Sabbath]."** The seven-headed beast will behave like Pharaoh. Its laws will be contrary to God's laws and its penalties will be severe. This will set up a test of faith. The sheep will say, **"We must obey God rather than men!"** (Acts 5:29)
2. Law enforcement will beat, persecute, imprison, and torture those choosing to observe God's Sabbath rest. Many saints will die from their punishment. However, God will give everyone who passes His test of faith the "seal of God" and

with this gift comes freedom from the bondage of sin that lives within us. The sinful nature will be no more! The saints will deem this gift more wonderful and valuable than anything on Earth. They would rather die than miss out on this amazing gift (and many will die).

3. When the devil physically appears, he will establish a fake “kingdom of God” (his theocracy). Each person will be forced to worship according to the dictate of the devil. To avoid death, billions of people will volunteer for the tattoo, the mark of the beast, to avoid death. Everyone who receives this mark will be assigned a task and a task master. Lucifer’s subjects will become slaves and the devil will literally work millions of his worshipers to death. Slaves were marked with tattoos in ancient times by their owners and the devil will do the same during the Great Tribulation. Slavery is mentioned three times in Revelation (Revelation 6:15; 13:16; 19:18) because the devil will use slavery and punishment to control his miserable subjects.
4. Finally, when Jesus appears at the Second Coming, Lucifer and the kings of Earth with their armies will meet the same end as Pharaoh and his army. After the waters of the Red Sea covered Pharaoh and his army, they were seen no more.

### **The Sabbath Rest Test and the Manna**

Because God’s Sabbath existed before the Exodus, God tested Israel’s faith *prior* to speaking the fourth commandment from Mt. Sinai. This test is described in Exodus 16 and it indicates Israel knew that the seventh day was to be kept holy before Jesus spoke the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai. The story begins with God miraculously feeding the Israelites with manna from Heaven each morning. For the first five days of the week, the Lord commanded that the people should gather enough manna for one day. However, on the sixth day, they should gather enough manna for two days because no manna would fall on the seventh day Sabbath. **“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘I will rain down bread from Heaven for you.**

The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way *I will test them* and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.’ ” (Exodus 16:4,5, italics mine)

“On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much - two omers [about two quarts] for each person - and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, ‘This is what the Lord commanded: ‘Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’ So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. ‘Eat it today,’ Moses said, ‘because today is a Sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.’ Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions?’ ” (Exodus 16:22-28)

Consider four interesting points:

**First**, some people claim that time has been lost, so there is no possible way to know which day of the week is God’s seventh day. This claim has no merit because 2,500 years after Creation Week, God identified the seventh day of the week for forty years! No manna fell on the Lord’s Day . . . the seventh day Sabbath.

**Second**, Muslims regard Friday as the sixth day of the week, a day for sermons and prayers. Jews regard Saturday, the seventh day of the week, as their holy day. Most Christians regard Sunday as the first day of the week, the day Jesus was resurrected. Given that these three ancient religious systems are in theological conflict, it is interesting that they

unanimously agree on the sequential order of the weekly cycle. In other words, Friday, Saturday and Sunday are the sixth, seventh and first days of the week. This universal agreement also contradicts the claim that time has been lost. The Jews have been worshiping on the seventh day ever since the Exodus. If, at the time of Christ, the Jews had been observing the Sabbath on the wrong day of the week, the Creator would have made a correction. Instead, He actually affirmed the timing of the seventh day when He said, **“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man [the Creator of the Sabbath] is Lord even of the Sabbath.”** (Mark 2:27,28, insertion mine)

**Third**, our sinful nature is naturally hostile toward God’s laws. This is an attitude that lurks within all mankind (even those born again) because of sin’s curse. (Romans 7) Some of the Israelites exhibited this hostility when they went out to gather manna on the seventh day and the Lord rebuked them for it. Paul describes the problem this way: **“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 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 8:5-8) Nothing has changed since Adam and Eve sinned. Humanity today is no different than in ancient times. Obeying God is still difficult for the sinful nature. Joyfully surrendering to God requires a rebirth, a whole new creation; (2 Corinthians 5:17) and even then, sometimes, obeying the Holy Spirit is difficult.

**Finally**, the claim that the fourth commandment is “Jewish” is totally false. Committing adultery or bearing false witness are not Jewish, so why is the fourth commandment rejected? The seventh day was Adam and Eve’s first full day of life. Jesus gave them His Sabbath as a day of physical rest and spiritual renewal, a day for coming apart from their regular activities

and work. In God's sight, there is a great difference between a holy day and a holiday. Man creates holidays and they are ours to do as we please, but only God can make a day holy. God said, **"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work."** Clearly, a holy day is not a work day. God's holy day is the seventh day of the week and we honor Him when we rest from our work as He did at Creation. This is where the conflict lies. The sinful nature does not want to give God time or money. We are naturally selfish and hostile to God's authority. This is why God tested Israel with His Sabbath in Egypt and again in the wilderness before He spoke the Ten Commandments.

### **Did Noah and Enoch Keep the Sabbath?**

Another thought I find interesting is that the Bible says Enoch and Noah walked with God. (Genesis 5:22; 6:9) God did not hide His Sabbath day from them. In fact, Jesus probably walked with them on the Sabbath! I believe this is true because Jesus said, **"The Sabbath was made for man."** (Mark 2:27) It is unreasonable to think that our Creator made the Sabbath for man and did not tell Enoch and Noah about it.

### **Summary**

Observing God's Sabbath will create family problems, work problems, social problems, and even unforeseen problems. I often say that Sabbath keeping does not benefit everyone; it really only benefits those who are led by the Spirit to see the importance and beauty of keeping it. Keeping the Sabbath will not merit salvation any more than keeping the other nine commandments. However, when God's Sabbath becomes a spiritual delight and the highlight of the week, we know that we are on the right track. Jesus spoke to Israel through Isaiah saying, **"If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,**

**then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.’ The mouth of the Lord has spoken.” (Isaiah 58:13,14)**

The coming war over worship will last forty-two months. (Revelation 13:5) A great conflict will arise over God’s Sabbath which will become a global test of faith. In some places, the Sabbath is already a test of faith! God’s people will be persecuted and ridiculed for no other reason than resting on God’s Sabbath. The devil will do everything within his power to make the seventh day an object of contempt because he does not want anyone worshiping Jesus! When God shows the Ark of His Covenant from Heaven’s temple, those who have passed the test of *faith* will rejoice when they see the reality of what they believed to be true. Their faith will become fact. On the other hand, those who rebelled against the law of God will be shocked when they see “the handwriting on the wall.” The wicked will realize their doom and soon drink the seven bowls of God’s wrath.



# Appendix

## Sunday Is Not Sacred

To be as clear as possible, I would like to begin by defining a term with roots in the sixteenth century which is rarely used today: “salvific faith.” I understand that salvific faith occurs when a person is prompted by the Holy Spirit to do something that is right and honorable in God’s sight, even if the price for obedience is significant. Additionally, the person is willing to trust in God and obey the Holy Spirit’s voice, leaving the consequences in God’s hands. For example, God commanded Noah to build an ark and the antediluvians ridiculed and scorned him for doing so. God commanded Abraham to leave his home and homeland, and he left not knowing where he was going! Nebuchadnezzar threw Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego into a fiery furnace because they believed the second commandment was obligatory, and their faith caused them to defy the king’s command to worship the golden image. These examples show that salvific faith is far more than intellectual assent; salvific faith involves a price for obeying God. (Hebrews 11)

I believe the Ten Commandments are obligatory and, for me, they are a matter of salvific faith. I accept them, both in their spiritual and physical sense, as God’s will. I have found, like Paul, I am unable to live in perfect compliance with them because my sinful nature rises up now and then and will not permit it. (Romans 7 and 8) Nevertheless, the Lord’s law is perfect and I love the covenant that the Ten Commandments represent. I eagerly look forward to the time when Jesus will remove my sinful nature and write His laws in my heart and mind. Then, I will be able to live in perfect harmony with Him and His perfect law forever! Until this transformation occurs, I live with this anticipation.

Even though I have closely studied the Bible on this topic and am intellectually settled on the matter, I have to accept by faith and Holy Spirit conviction that the observance of the fourth commandment is God's will. Of course, I understand that most Christians do not share my conviction. They often excuse themselves from the obligation of the fourth commandment by saying, "the Ten Commandments were abolished at the cross," or "it doesn't matter which day I keep holy as long as I worship God" or, "I worship God every day." There is nothing in the Bible that forbids or requires worshipping God every day. However, there is a commandment that declares six days are secular and the seventh day of the week is holy. The Creator declares the seventh day is *unlike* the other six. The fourth commandment requires us to honor our Creator every Saturday by resting from work.

Consider four theological concepts which work together in perfect harmony: law, grace, faith, and obedience. These concepts do not cancel one another. God does not "give" with large print and then "take away" with fine print. The first concept in God's government is His law. No one, including God Himself, is above the law. This means no one can violate the law without incurring the penalty of the law. God established His law before grace, faith, and obedience became possible. Actually, God's law establishes the need for grace, faith, and obedience.

King David understood the primacy 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."** (Psalm 19:7,8) No individual can appreciate the depth of David's words unless the Holy Spirit opens that person's eyes and heart to understand 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)

After the apostle Paul encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul understood that no man can achieve or produce the righteousness required for eternal life. He wrote, **“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) Paul also understood that salvation was only possible through God’s amazing grace (unmerited favor), **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”** (Titus 2:11-13)

The Bible teaches that where there is no law, there is no sin. (Romans 4:15) This is common sense because a person cannot violate a non-existing law. The Bible says that sin is the transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4) and Paul says, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** (Romans 3:23) Therefore, if we are sinners, God’s laws are present.

Paul says that love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:10), but he only realized this fact after he was born again. Prior to his conversion, Paul thought that perfect obedience was the fulfillment of the law. (Philippians 3:4-6) Jesus was asked which law is the greatest. He responded, **“‘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 [a phrase used to describe the Old Testament when Jesus was on Earth] hang on these two commandments.”** (Matthew 22:37-40, insertion mine)

### God's Law is a Covenant and a Promise

The Ten Commandments are both a law and a promise. For the sinful nature they are law, but for the spiritual nature they are a promise. God has promised to write His laws in our hearts and minds at the appointed time. (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:10,11) The Ten Commandments are called a covenant in the Old Testament (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13) because they reveal what love will do. The first four commandments reveal what love for God produces and the last six commandments reveal what love for our neighbors produces. When God's law is written in our hearts and minds and the sinful nature is replaced with the sinless nature Jesus originally gave to Adam and Eve, our thoughts, words, and actions will be in perfect harmony with the Ten Commandments!

The Ten Commandments are so important that Jesus Himself spoke them from Mt. Sinai. Contrary to what many Protestants claim, *all ten of them* are reiterated in the New Testament. For example, Paul affirmed the perpetuity of the fourth commandment about thirty years after Jesus ascended saying, **“There remains, then, a [seventh day] 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 [on the seventh day].”** (Hebrews 4:9,10, insertions mine)

When Jesus died on the cross, God abolished the Levitical laws He gave to Israel. (Colossians 2:11-17) From the beginning, the Levitical laws included a sunset clause. When the Lamb of God died on the cross, the Levitical laws ended because God no longer required animal sacrifices. Many people think that animal sacrifices in the Old Testament actually brought salvation, but Paul says otherwise, **“it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”** (Hebrews 10:4)

God required Israel to sacrifice bulls, goats, and lambs until Jesus died so Israel could study the plan of salvation and understand “the reality of things to come.” (Colossians 2:17) God designed the ceremonial system, which required animal

sacrifices, to serve as a carefully constructed “drama.” After Jesus died, there was no further need of it. The Levitical laws which also separated Jews from Gentiles were also abolished. Notice the wonderful result, **“But now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far away [from truth and the joy of salvation] have been brought near through [faith in] the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two [separate nations into] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the [Levitical] law with its commandments and regulations.**

**His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two [separate nations], thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you [Gentiles] who were far away and peace to those [the Jews] who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you [Gentiles] are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people [all who are led by the Spirit] and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the Chief Cornerstone.”** (Ephesians 2:13-20, insertions mine)

The Ten Commandments do not speak of eternal life because the purpose of the Ten Commandments is not salvation. God gave them to all mankind through Israel to define immorality. If a nation lives in harmony with the Ten Commandments, avoiding all forms of immoral conduct, everyone lives safely and happily! God also gave the Ten Commandments as a mirror so that we can compare our thoughts, words, and behavior with the intent of His laws. If we relate to God’s laws properly, they become beneficial. We can see our shortcomings and realize our daily need for the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to live better lives. (James 1:22-25) Finally, the Ten Commandments reveal what genuine love for God and neighbors will produce. No one who loves God will take His

name in vain or worship an idol, and no one who loves his neighbor as himself will steal from him or commit murder. The Ten Commandments are the basis for the golden rule. Jesus said, **“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets [the Old Testament].”** (Matthew 7:12) Children should also be taught the inverse of the Golden Rule: As you do unto others, God shall do the same unto you. (Matthew 5:25,26; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30; Revelation 2:23)

### A Legalist

When it comes to salvation, there are Old Testament legalists and New Testament legalists. An Old Testament legalist believes he *will be* saved through perfect obedience to God’s law. Paul was an Old Testament legalist before his conversion. So was the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:17-23 who assumed he was without fault in God’s sight. New Testament legalists believe they *have been* saved because they have done everything God requires for salvation. (Romans 10:10) Both forms of legalism are based on human effort or achievement even though the theology, behaviors, and beliefs are poles apart.

God’s grace does not save us. Instead, His grace makes salvation possible. Millions of people (Revelation 20:8) will not receive eternal life because they chose to reject God’s grace and violate the voice of the Holy Spirit. Our response to the Holy Spirit determines our eternal destiny. This is where salvific faith comes into focus. If we follow the voice of the Holy Spirit, we will suffer persecution. **“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”** (2 Timothy 3:12) Persecution is where salvific faith is tested!

When the Father sees a king or a pauper living by faith, He covers that person’s sins with Jesus’ righteousness (the sinless life of Jesus) because Jesus produced the righteousness necessary for eternal life when He was on Earth. (Romans 1:17) If we allow the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts, we will share King David’s desire, **“I long for your salvation, O Lord,**

**and your law is my delight.”** (Psalm 119:174) Remember, God’s law is a spiritual matter. (Romans 7:14) When we love our neighbor enough that we would not steal anything that belongs to him, the intent of the law is fulfilled. Similarly, God’s Sabbath is not for Old or New Testament legalists. If the Holy Spirit does not lead a person into joyfully observing God’s seventh day Sabbath, there is no point of observing it. People who walk with God love walking with God! The consequences of walking with God usually end in persecution because He leads us away from the love of this world. (1 John 2:15)

### **Why Worship on Sunday?**

For the past 2,000 years, Christians have challenged the importance of God’s seventh day Sabbath with seven arguments purporting to make Sunday “the Lord’s day.” However, if we consider each argument on its merits, we come to the opposite conclusion. I believe the seven arguments used to exalt Sunday sacredness actually ruin the prospect of it! However, each person has to look at the evidence and determine for himself whether or not the Bible actually supports the claim that God transferred the sacredness of His seventh day Sabbath to the first day of the week.

### **Argument 1. The Holy Spirit Came on Sunday**

Some people maintain that according to Acts 2, the Holy Spirit was given to the church on the Day of Pentecost, which fell on a Sunday; and this event, they say, affirms the sacredness of Sunday.

According to Leviticus 23, the Feast of Pentecost (feast of the 50<sup>th</sup> day) *always* fell on a Sunday. The countdown to Pentecost began on the first Sunday after Passover week ended. The Jews celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> day after seven full weeks of 49 days had passed. This means they observed the Feast of Pentecost on a Sunday for more than 1,400 years *before* the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost in A.D. 30. Does the manifestation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in A.D. 30 suddenly affirm the sacredness of Sunday? If so, why is the Creator totally

silent about this transition? Thousands of people attended the Feast of Pentecost in A.D. 30 and they spoke many languages because they came from many nations. *All* of them were Jews and observed the seventh day Sabbath, so why does the Bible say nothing about the sacredness of Sunday if Sunday suddenly became a holy day?

Sometime after the manifestation of the Holy Spirit at the Feast of Pentecost, God sent Peter to the home of a Gentile named Cornelius. (Acts 10:44-47) After Cornelius heard the gospel of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon him and his family *in the same way* that it came upon the disciples at Pentecost. (Acts 15:7-11) Again, the Bible says nothing in Acts 10 about the sacredness of Sunday or that the fourth commandment had been abolished. When Peter reported his visit to church leaders a dozen years later, he said nothing about making Sunday a sacred day when he described the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost or in the home of Cornelius. (Acts 15)

After Peter's meeting with Cornelius, Paul met twelve men at Ephesus who had been baptized but had not received the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul laid hands on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:1-7) just as the disciples did at Pentecost. The Bible records nothing in Acts 19 about the sacredness of Sunday or the fourth commandment being terminated. In fact, the Bible says in the following verses (Acts 19:8-12) that Paul boldly went into the synagogue for three months to preach on the kingdom of God, and when the Jews would not tolerate his teaching, he moved to the lecture hall of Tyrannus where he met "*daily*" with the people for two years. Paul said nothing about Sunday being a holy day for two years! There is only one way this is possible. Paul had no idea that Sunday was a sacred day!

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem at Pentecost, in the house of Cornelius, or in Ephesus did not terminate the fourth commandment. The Ten Commandments cannot be abolished without a plain "thus saith the Creator" and there is no such statement in the New Testament. The fourth

commandment cannot be separated from the other nine; they come as a package of ten promises. They are a covenant and all *ten* promises are kept in the Ark of His Covenant. Twenty-five years after Jesus ascended to Heaven, James wrote this: **“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.”** (James 2:10,11) James would not have referred to two of the Ten Commandments if they had been nailed to the cross a quarter of a century earlier. James would not speak of the *whole* law if some of the commandments were no longer obligatory.

Argument 1 does not support the sacredness of Sunday.

### **Argument 2. Three Thousand People were Baptized on Sunday**

The Bible indicates about three thousand people were baptized at the Feast of Pentecost in A.D. 30. (Acts 2:41) For some people, these baptisms affirm that Sunday was sacred. They reason that on the day of Pentecost, the New Testament church gave the first message (Acts 2:14), the first converts were added to the church, and the first baptism of believers occurred. (Acts 2:37) All of these “firsts” were wonderful, but wonderful things do not affect the fourth commandment. If God Himself declares a specific day holy, only He can annul or change its holiness.

A baptism or a wedding on a Sunday, Tuesday, or Wednesday does not make it a holy day. Jesus suffered and died on Friday, but that does not make Friday a holy day. A prayer meeting on Wednesday or an Agape Feast on Friday night do not make those days holy. Even if John the Baptist baptized Jesus on a Sunday, this could not make Sunday holy. As far as we can tell, John the Baptist baptized people every day of the week! (Mark 1)

Argument 2 fails because the Creator has said nothing that suggests or indicates that a day becomes holy because people are baptized on it.

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### Argument 3. Jesus Was Resurrected on Sunday

Some Christians claim Jesus' resurrection on the first day of the week makes Sunday a holy day. God would not unravel the fourth commandment and transfer the holiness of the seventh day to the first day without telling Sabbath keeping believers about it! This claim has no Scriptural support.

Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene early on Sunday morning (John 20:1). Then, He ascended to the Father (John 20:17) and drove Lucifer out of Heaven. (Revelation 12:7-9) That afternoon, Jesus returned to Earth and joined two disciples as they were walking back to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-31) After this, He appeared to the disciples who were meeting in a secure place, hiding from the Jews. (John 20:19) Later on, Jesus also appeared to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. (John 21:1) On one occasion after His resurrection, Jesus appeared before a crowd of over five hundred people! (1 Corinthians 15:6) Given the exposure that Jesus had during the 40 days He was on Earth after His resurrection, why did He say nothing about the sacredness of Sunday? This silence is puzzling because we know that His followers were 99.9% Jewish. If the Ten Commandments had been nailed to the cross when Jesus died, surely something as dramatic as abolishing the Sabbath and making Sunday a holy day was discussed; there is no such discussion in the Bible.

Consider the Sunday afternoon that Jesus walked to Emmaus with His disciples. Luke 24:13 indicates the distance between Jerusalem and Emmaus was seven miles. According to the Bible, they arrived in Emmaus as the day was "nearly over" (Luke 24:29) and when they were about to eat, the disciples discovered that it was Jesus who had walked with them. However, before they could begin eating, Jesus disappeared. They became so excited that they returned to Jerusalem that *same* evening, arriving after dark to tell the rest of the disciples that they had actually seen Jesus! (Luke 24:33)

Luke's account suggests that Jesus and His disciples did not regard Sunday as a holy day because they would not have

walked seven miles if it were considered a holy day. According to Acts 1:12, the Jews believed a Sabbath day's walk could be no more than two miles; the distance from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives. Moreover, Jesus did not declare "Resurrection Sunday" would be a holy day before He was crucified, and a few hours after His resurrection, He did not say anything about it on the road to Emmaus. Why would there be total silence on such a profound change if, indeed, such a change had occurred? Can you imagine observing Sunday as a holy day all of your life and suddenly switching to Saturday without any discussion or questions?

On Thursday, three days before walking with His disciples to Emmaus, Jesus and His disciples sat on the Mount of Olives. The disciples were anxious to know about the end of the world (Matthew 24:3) and, responding to their concerns, Jesus gave two prophecies. The first prophecy pertained to the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem which was about forty years away (A.D. 70), and the second prophecy pertained to the end of the world. Speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus said, **"Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath."** (Matthew 24:20) If Jesus, the Creator of the Sabbath, foreknew that its sacredness would be transferred to Sunday in a mere three days, He would not have encouraged His disciples to pray so that they would not have to travel forty years later on the Sabbath.

Finally, if God declared a transition from Sabbath to Sunday during the first century A.D., the New Testament would have had much to say about it. We know that Jesus chose Paul, one man speaking with one voice, to extract Christianity from the cradle of Judaism. As a Pharisee, Paul was highly educated in the economy of Judaism. After Paul's conversion, Jesus revealed many things to Paul that would otherwise be unknown. Armed with both his earthly and heavenly education, Paul faced an enormous amount of controversy during the years of his ministry. His main problem with the Jews was getting them to understand that salvation comes through faith instead of legalism. He wrestled with Jewish

converts constantly over conflicts such as circumcision, (Acts 15:1,2) eating food offered to idols, (Acts 15:20,29; 1 Corinthians 8:1-4) and the observance of feast days.

Many Christians today are confused about observing the feast days God gave to ancient Israel. Some people advocate the idea that Christians should observe the feasts. For example, they will often use Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 5:8 to justify observing Passover. Paul wrote, **"Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth."** If we interpret Paul's comments to mean that Christians should "keep the Festival" of Passover, then Paul's theology becomes internally conflicted. This would force Paul into saying one thing in one place and then canceling it by making a contrary statement in another place. We would not know which of Paul's statements to believe.

Peter wrote that Paul's writings can be difficult to understand and many people distort them **"to their own destruction."** (2 Peter 3:16) For us to understand Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 5 about keeping the Festival of Passover, we first have to understand Paul's attitude and behavior. He wrote, **"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win [to Christ] as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law [the Ten Commandments] but am under Christ's law [which says, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34,35], so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the**

sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”

(1 Corinthians 9:19-23, insertions mine)

When he was among the Jews, Paul was willing to “go along” with Jewish customs even though he previously was in bondage to them (Philippians 3:4-7), but through Christ he had become “free of them.” (Acts 21:21-40) When Paul was among Gentiles who ate food offered to idols, he also ate food offered to idols because he knew that an idol was nothing. (1 Corinthians 8:4-7) His flip-flop behavior deeply offended the Jews, especially those who wanted to diminish or abolish his gospel.

After Paul was converted, he spent three years in the desert. (Galatians 1:17,18) While there, Jesus revealed many things to him that could not otherwise be known. (Ephesians 3:1-6; 2 Corinthians 12:1-9) Jesus explained to Paul that the Father had abolished the Levitical system; that is, God abolished the *drama* He originally gave Israel with all of its ceremonial services and nailed it to the cross. These revelations explain how and why Paul could say to Jews who wanted to become Christians, **“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. *These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.*”** (Colossians 2:16,17, italics mine)

It was very difficult for Jewish converts, steeped in the intricate traditions of Judaism, to let their cherished customs go when uniting with the church that Jesus established. The Bible provides a good example which occurred about fifteen years after Jesus ascended to Heaven. **“When Peter came to Antioch, I [Paul] opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain [leading] men came from [Jerusalem, sent by] James [the president of the newly formed Christian Church], he [Peter] used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived [from Jerusalem], he began to draw back and separate himself from the**

**Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group** [many early Jewish converts insisted that all believers in Christ must be circumcised in order to be saved - Acts 15:1,2]. **The other Jews** [who lived in Antioch] **joined him** [Peter] **in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even** [Paul's partner] **Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, 'You are a Jew, yet you** [have freedom through Christ to] **live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you** [suddenly] **force** [these] **Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? We who are Jews by birth** [and proud of it] **and not** [the poor lowly] **'Gentile sinners' [now] know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we** [proud Jews], **too, have** [been scolded, we must] **put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the** [Levitical] **law, because by observing the law** [any law] **no one will be justified.'**" (Galatians 2:11-16, insertions mine)

Paul knew the ceremonial system: animal sacrifices, new moon feasts, and annual feasts (Sabbaths), were shadows of things that pointed to Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection. After Jesus came to Earth, lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and ascended to the Father, the Father abolished the ceremonial system. Therefore, when Paul was among the Jews, he went along with their religious traditions to win them to Christ because the ceremonies no longer meant anything to him. When Paul was among the Gentiles, he ate food offered to idols in order to win them to Christ, because the idol is nothing and food meant nothing. If you consider the context in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul actually scolds the church at Corinth for trying to remain Jewish and for keeping the Festival. His words are often removed from their context so that he appears to endorse the very practice he is discouraging! He said, "**Your** [earlier] **boasting** [1 Corinthians 4:18] **is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast** [yeast was prohibited during the Feast of Unleavened Bread because yeast represented

sin] works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast [in your hearts] that you may be a new batch without yeast – as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. [So what are you now celebrating? The reason for observing the feast is behind us. It has been fulfilled!] **Therefore let us keep the** [spirit of the] **Festival** [alive in our hearts], **not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.”**

(1 Corinthians 5:6-8, insertions mine)

Paul used a metaphor to say, “If you insist on keeping the Passover, it is foolish because our Passover Lamb [that is, the Passover Lamb of believers in Jesus] has been sacrificed. Therefore, observe and keep the true meaning of the Festival by living a life that is pleasing and acceptable to Jesus by eating the bread of sincerity and truth.” The Biblical truth that eliminates the observance of the feasts post-Calvary is simple: *One cannot observe the feasts without first meeting the specifications required for the feasts by Levitical law.* After Paul understood that the Father had appointed Jesus (from the tribe of Judah) as the High Priest of sinners, the Levitical law had to be abolished. **“For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.”** (Hebrews 7:12)

Contrary to what most Christian scholars say, the context of Galatians 4:10-13, Colossians 2:16, and Romans 14:5,6, does not concern the fourth commandment or the observance of the seventh day Sabbath. The issue is the observance of “feast days.” Israel’s feast days fell throughout the week and were also called “Sabbaths” (Leviticus 16:31) because God forbade Israel from working on them. When a feast day and the seventh day occurred on the same day, it was called a “high Sabbath” or a “special Sabbath.” (John 19:31)

Finally, there is no mention of any controversy concerning the sacredness of Sunday in the New Testament. This silence indicates there was *no* controversy during the first century

because most, if not all, of the New Testament was written in the last half of the first century. These points add up to only one conclusion: Jesus' resurrection on Sunday did not change or abolish the holiness of the seventh day.

Argument 3 does not establish the sacredness of Sunday.

#### **Argument 4. Paul Ate at the Lord's Table on Sunday**

Some Christians appeal to Paul's actions at Troas to support the sacredness of Sunday. They maintain that Paul preached and believers partook of the Lord's Table (Lord's Supper) on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7)

If I were advocating for the sacredness of Sunday, I would not use Acts 20:7 because this argument *always* backfires when *all* of the facts are considered. To begin, the Bible says: **"On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting."** (Acts 20:7,8) The first day of the week began at sundown in Bible times. (Genesis 1:5; Leviticus 23:32; John 19:31) Therefore, Paul met with the believers in Troas after the Sabbath had passed and as the first day of the week began. Paul began speaking at sundown and he preached until midnight (about six hours).

Consider three facts about this meeting:

1. Advocates for Sunday sacredness claim "the believers partook of the Lord's Table," but Acts 20 does not say anything about eating at the Lord's Table or partaking in the Lord's Supper. The text says they "came together to break bread." Breaking bread does not necessarily mean partaking of the Lord's Table. "Breaking bread" is a Biblical expression for sharing or eating a meal. (Luke 24:35; Acts 27:35) Notice this passage which describes the activities of the apostles and church members after the Feast of Pentecost passed. **"Every day they [the apostles and believers] continued to meet together in the temple**

**courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”** (Acts 2:46,47, insertion mine)

An accident at midnight interrupted Paul’s preaching in Troas. Eutychus went to sleep sitting in a window and fell to the ground from the third story. The fall killed Eutychus, but the Holy Spirit brought him to life through Paul. After this miraculous event occurred, Paul went back upstairs, *broke bread again* and continued talking until daylight. At daybreak (Sunday morning at daylight), Paul left Troas with his traveling associates because he and his associates did not regard Sunday as a holy day! (Acts 20:9-13)

Does partaking of “the Lord’s Table” on Sunday make Sunday a holy day? Before you answer, do not forget that Jesus and His disciples “broke bread” in the upper room and ate the “Lord’s Supper” on a Thursday night. (1 Corinthians 11:23-25) When comparing the actions of Jesus and His disciples with Paul and his associates, whose example is more important? Does either example make a holy day? If so, we would have to choose Thursday as a holy day.

2. Acts 20:7 does not describe a regular church service. The Bible says Paul regularly worshiped on the seventh day Sabbath. (Acts 16:13; 17:2; 18:4; 19:8) The situation in Acts 20:7 is a farewell meeting, not a holy day worship service. The meeting was held during Paul’s final hours in Troas because many of the believers suspected it would be the last time they would see him.
3. Finally, is it possible that two meals and a farewell talk in Troas could make Sunday a holy day? Does any man have the power and authority to void any law of God? The Bible says that Paul left Troas at daylight on Sunday morning (Acts 20:11). How could Paul teach that Sunday was a sacred day and then continue his journey on Sunday? The

evidence in Acts 20 supports one conclusion: Paul and his traveling associates did not consider the first day of the week to be a holy day, even fifteen years after Christ's ascension.

Argument 4 does not support the sacredness of Sunday.

### **Argument 5. Paul Encouraged Believers to Bring Their Offerings on Sunday**

Another Bible reference often used to affirm the sacredness of Sunday is 1 Corinthians 16:2. It is claimed that Paul instructed the believers in Corinth to bring their offerings to the Lord on the first day of the week. Advocates for Sunday worship maintain believers were obviously assembling on that day. Here's the passage: **"Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem."** (1 Corinthians 16:1-3)

Paul made this request while travelling for two reasons. First, barter was the nature and order of business in those days. Paul could not sail to Jerusalem with donated animals, produce, grains, and other material goods. Therefore, He asked that all donations be converted into cash *before* he arrived in Corinth. Second, Paul did not want believers in Corinth to wait until he arrived and then rush and convert their possessions into cash; He knew it would be time consuming and foolish because hurriedly exchanging goods for cash means less cash. So, Paul wisely advised that believers start on Sunday of each week, which Paul regarded as a regular work day, to begin the process of converting possessions into money at a good exchange rate.

Does Paul's request to the believers in Corinth support the sacredness of Sunday? No...not at all. If a person wanted to

send a gift to the suffering saints in Jerusalem, Paul advocated taking care of business starting on Sunday, the first day of the week, a regular workday.

Argument 5 does not support Sunday sacredness.

### **Argument 6. Early Christians Worshiped on “The Lord’s Day”**

Some advocates for Sunday worship will admit that political history could have influenced a disregard for Sabbath worship and exalted the observance of Sunday as a holy day. However, realizing that Sunday sacredness requires divine authority, they reject the idea that Roman Emperor Constantine could have changed the day for worship from Sabbath to Sunday. They also reject the idea that the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 363-365) could have changed the day of worship. These advocates often use the argument that “early Christians observed Sunday” because early on, they called Sunday “the Lord’s Day.”

There is only one text in the Bible that suggests which day of the week is “the Lord’s day.” It is the seventh day Sabbath: **“And He [Jesus] said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is *Lord also of the Sabbath*.”** (Mark 2:27,28, insertion and italics mine) Jesus uttered these words after some Pharisees condemned Him and His disciples for picking ears of grain as they walked through a grain field on the Sabbath. **“The Pharisees said to Him, ‘Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?’ ”** (Mark 2:24)

Jesus condemned their legalism by putting the topic of Sabbath observance in proper perspective. First, He forced them to admit that long ago, King David and his companions had eaten the consecrated bread from the temple without incurring guilt. (Mark 2:25,26) This happened because King David’s need for food was greater than the priest’s entitlement to it. Using this principle, Jesus made the point that picking ears of grain on the Sabbath while walking through the field was not

considered working. The Sabbath was made for man's benefit. He and His disciples were hungry and food was within easy reach. Contrary to what the Pharisees thought, the Sabbath was not created as an object of worship; instead, Jesus wants man to worship the Creator on His Sabbath day! Then, Jesus speaking as the Creator declared, **"Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath."** Jesus meant, "I not only made the Sabbath for man's benefit, my conduct as the Lord of the Sabbath also shows how the Sabbath is to be observed!"

It is true that both Sabbath and Sunday were called "the Lord's Day" in early church history, and there is an interesting reason for this. In A.D. 70, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and took the surviving Jews back to Rome to work as slaves. The Romans intensely hated the Jews and they considered followers of Christ to be a sect of Jews; after all, Jesus was a Jew. Therefore, Christians sought to distance themselves from their Jewish identity in various ways. One technique was to call the Sabbath, "the Lord's day." Since a Jew would never call the Sabbath, "the Lord's Day," this was a good way to maintain distinction. About A.D. 95, when John was exiled to the island of Patmos for his faith in Jesus, he was given a great vision on the Sabbath and John used the phrase, "the Lord's Day:" **"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:'"** (Revelation 1:10,11, italics mine)

Meanwhile in Rome, many Romans worshiped on Sunday; it was a weekly holiday for recognizing and celebrating Mithra, a Roman Sun God. Romans observed Sunday in a manner unlike the strict and legalistic way the Jews observed the Sabbath. Over time, Christians in Rome, to avoid any association with Judaism, began to amalgamate their beliefs with the followers of Mithra and call Sunday "the Lord's Day." Their reasoning was that Jesus came from the tomb on Sunday.

"But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly because it is the first day on which God, having

wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead.” (Justin Martyr, *Ante-Nicene Christian Library/The First Apology of Justin Martyr*, (Boston 1887) p. 187, Chap 67) This is the first recorded instance of early Christians justifying the sacredness of Sunday. The justification Martyr used for holding a common assembly on Sunday is interesting. First, he cited the separation of darkness and light on the first day of Creation as grounds for holding a common assembly, and then he refers to the resurrection of Jesus. Martyr offered no Scriptural authority for assembling on Sunday, but his remarks indicate how he justified meeting on Sunday. Justin Martyr wrote this remark in A.D. 150 and today, millions of Christians erroneously think that “the Lord’s Day” is Sunday. Certainly, this is a long-held tradition, but the association of the Lord’s Day with Sunday is based on Jewish aversion rather than Scripture.

Argument 6 does not support the sacredness of Sunday.

### **Argument 7: Early Christian Believers Met on Sunday**

Another argument used to affirm the sacredness of Sunday is created from “cherry picking” the writings of early church fathers such as Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Didache, Ignatius, Dionysius, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. This argument maintains these writers affirmed that early Christians met on Sunday for worship. This approach to the problem of Sunday sacredness is a smoke screen to hide the fact that the New Testament says nothing about Sunday becoming a holy day. Everyone knows that if certain historical facts are kept from sight, people can twist them to create a skewed view of history and make it be whatever they want. However, when all of the historical facts are presented, they tell a very different story than what is often represented as history.

During the first century A.D., Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire because of persecution. Christians were constantly on the move to escape capture, confiscation, punishment, and death. For a while, each Caesar seemed to

be more intent on destroying Jews and Christians than his predecessor. Therefore, early Christians made theological compromises to survive. During the second century A.D., Judaism's influence over Christianity in Italy had faded because three or four generations of Roman-born Christians had come and gone. Jerusalem was a non-important heap of ruins and Christians wanted their own religious identity – an identity that had nothing to do with the Jews.

To make matters worse, many Gentiles had “joined the church” and brought their peculiar religious baggage. Consequently, Christianity in Rome mutated into a Romanesque version, which was unlike Christianity in other parts of the world. By A.D. 150, 120 years after Jesus ascended, Christians, in Rome, had found areas where compromise was possible with Mithraism. This led to theological ecumenism and apostasy. Many Christian denominations are participating in a similar process today and again, the result will be awful.

When Rome destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Christianity was deprived of its headquarters and “main office.” Each church quickly found itself alone and became its own authority in matters of faith and doctrine. Early Church history indicates that Christians *adjusted* beliefs and doctrines as needed, depending on location and leadership. During the last part of the second century A.D., Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons, located in what is now called France, became alarmed with the heresies that had infiltrated the Christian movement. He was aware of how Christians in Rome had begun to meet on Sunday and abandoned the seventh day Sabbath, and he spoke against it. He wrote: “For He [Christ] did not make void, but fulfilled the law [Ten Commandments].” (Irenaeus, *Ante-Nicean Christian Library/Against Heresies, Vol 1*, (Boston, 1887) p. 471, insertions mine)

Tertullian, another early church father, wrote extensively concerning Christian doctrine. He, like Irenaeus, was alarmed at the practices of certain Christians, especially those in Rome. In regards to the seventh day Sabbath he wrote: “Thus

Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath. He kept the law [Ten Commandments] thereof . . . He restored to the Sabbath the works for were proper for it.” (Tertullian, *Ante-Nicean Christian Library/Book IV, Chap 12, Vol 3*, (Boston, 1887) p. 362, insertion mine)

Debate over Sunday observance grew in those early years because the church in Rome defended the practice. Bishop Archelaus responded to bishop Manes, saying: “Again as to the assertion that the [seventh day] Sabbath has been abolished we deny that He [Christ] has abolished it plainly. For He Himself was also Lord of the Sabbath.” (Archelaus, *Ante-Nicean Christian Library/The Disputation with Manes*, Vol 4, (Boston, 1887) p. 217, insertions mine)

By A.D. 320, confusion and compromise had devastated many early Christian beliefs. Christians in Alexandria, Egypt were defending views on the deity of Jesus that opposed the church in Rome. The Christian leaders discussed, debated, and argued the need for centralized church authority and leadership. Many agreed that church doctrine needed to be defined and protected so that heresy would not destroy Christianity, but they could not agree on a process or who would do the job best.

Poor communication, distance, differences in culture, education, language, and social factors began to define Christianity according to geography. It was easy to see the result would be a highly fractured church. Both the world and Christianity needed a strong unifying leader and Constantine concluded he was “the chosen one!” He believed God had divinely appointed him to rescue a crumbling Roman empire and the universal Christian Church. When Constantine ascended to the throne as sole ruler of the empire, about A.D. 312, he had transformed himself into a Christian for political advantage. Constantine was clever and saw Christianity as a means of unifying an ethnically and religiously diverse empire. When he endorsed the version of Christianity that was centered in Rome, he set a sequence of events in motion that could not have been imagined.

To put the empire on notice that Constantine had established a new world order, he had his army baptized into Christianity by marching them through a river. Then, to promote a universal day for worship, he implemented a Sunday law in March, A.D. 321 as a political compromise. Constantine patronized everyone by declaring a weekly holy day/holiday. His Sunday law meshed with customary Roman practice and it aligned with the desires of the church at Rome. Even non-Christians were quite happy with a national day of rest. “Let all judges and all city people and all tradesmen, rest upon the venerable day of the Sun. But let those dwelling in the country freely and with full liberty attend to the culture of their fields; since it frequently happens, that no other day is so fit for the sowing of grain, or the planting of vines; hence the favorable time should not be allowed to pass, lest the provision of heaven be lost.” (Cod. Justin, *III Tit 12, L.3.*, March 7, A.D. 321) Did you notice that Constantine’s decree *did not* mandate worship on Sunday?

Although Christians in Rome had been meeting on Sunday for more than a century when Constantine announced his decree, other Christians around the Mediterranean Sea were not overjoyed. Most of the Christians outside Rome were still observing the seventh day Sabbath. Socrates writes near the turn of the fourth century: “Such is the difference in the churches on the subject of fasts. Nor is there less variation in regard to religious assemblies. For although almost all churches through the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Rome and Alexandria have ceased to do this.” (Socrates, *Ante-Nicean Christian Library/Ecclesiastical History, Book V, chap 22, Vol II*, (Boston, 1887) p. 132)

Constantine’s decree did not abolish the importance of the seventh day Sabbath; something else would have to occur before that could be accomplished. The leaders from the church in Rome needed a doctrine that dealt directly with the “Lord’s Day” to present a strong case before a contentious and divided body of Christians. Eusebius, another apologist (peacemaker) of the era, was a Christian confidant and advisor of Constantine.

He masterminded a doctrine for Sunday observance that remains intact for Catholics today. Carefully notice his anti-Semitic argument for the observance of Sunday:

“Wherefore as they [the Jews] rejected it [the Sabbath law], the Word [Christ] by the new covenant, translated and transferred the feast of the Sabbath to the morning light, and gave us the symbol of true rest, viz. [in other words], the saving Lord’s day, the first [day] of light, in which the Savior of the world, after all his labors among men, obtained the victory over death, and passed the portals of heaven, having achieved a work superior to the six-days creation. On this day, which is the first [day] of light and of the true Sun, we assemble, after an interval of six days, and celebrate holy and spiritual Sabbaths, even all nations redeemed by Him throughout the world, and do those things according to the spiritual law, which were decreed for the priests to do on the Sabbath. And all things whatsoever that it was the duty to do on the Sabbath, *these we have transferred* to the Lord’s day, as more appropriately belong to it, because it has a precedence and is first in rank, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath. All things whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, *these we have transferred* to the Lord’s Day.” (*Eusebius’s Commentary on the Psalms*, Psalm 92, quoted in *The Literature of the Sabbath* by Robert Cox, Vol I, p. 361, italics and insertions mine)

Did you notice the last two sentences in Eusebius’ argument? Eusebius testifies that “we” (Constantine and the leaders of the church) “have transferred all things, whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath” to Sunday. Eusebius offered no Scriptural authority for this change because there is none. Additionally, no church father or council from that time-period challenged or affirmed Eusebius’ claims. As it turned out, Eusebius took the thorny problem of worship in hand and became the father of a heresy that favored the apostate practices of the church in Rome. When a mere mortal, no matter how well-intentioned, declares by his own authority that the law of an eternal Almighty God is null and void, he is both delusional and evil.

Centuries later, the writings of Eusebius created a huge problem for Protestants. Catholics do not question the sacredness of Sunday because they believe the Church has the authority to change God's laws. They believe Jesus gave this authority to Peter and his successors. (Matthew 16:19) On the other hand, Protestants have had to scramble for answers, because they insist their faith and doctrine is based solely on the Word of God, but there is no biblical support for their Sunday-keeping arguments. Even though their reasoning is different, Catholics and Protestants abolished the Sabbath and substituted Sunday in its place. Who has higher authority – the Creator or the created?

One man says, "Every day is holy, I worship God every day of the week."

Another man says, "It does not matter which day we worship on as long as we worship God." Such comments show no regard for the Creator's authority. If Jesus were on Earth today, He would say of most Christians the same thing He said of the Jews, **"They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."** (Matthew 15:9)

Argument 7 does not support the sacredness of Sunday. It does explain how apostasy overtook Christianity.

## Summary

We have examined seven common arguments used to rationalize the sacredness of Sunday. None of these arguments are valid. When it comes to embracing the fourth commandment, Christians generally face three obstacles:

1. **Christian Culture.** Ever since the second century A.D., Christians in Rome have been advocating Sunday worship. Today, nearly two billion Catholics and Protestants worship on Sunday, regarding Sunday to be "the Lord's day" when there is no support for it in Scripture. Therefore, going against mainstream Christian culture and the opinions of "experts," who hold advanced degrees from seminaries, is difficult for an ordinary person. Those who insist on keeping

the seventh day holy are often regarded as contemptible legalists who know nothing about the Bible or God's grace.

2. **Lack of Knowledge.** Because Catholics and a majority of Protestants worship on Sunday, very few Christians have had any reason to question or examine the root cause of Sunday worship. Moreover, many people worshipping on Sunday do not regard Sunday as a "sacred day." For them, Sunday is a day for "common assembly," that is, going to church; other than that, Sunday is a day for recreation, working, or doing whatever a person wants or needs to do. This disconnect from the sacredness of the seventh day Sabbath has created the following justification: "The fourth commandments does not really matter as long as we worship God and maintain a close relationship with Him."

I think most Christians agree that one can worship the Lord every day of the week, but the requirement stated in the fourth commandment is altogether another matter. The fourth commandment demands that we cease from our labors and rest *on the seventh day* that begins Friday at sundown and ends at sundown on Sabbath. (Leviticus 23:32) The Lord commands that those who are within our gates such as employees, servants, or anyone under our control must also rest. The fourth commandment does not produce a weekly holiday. It produces a holy day, a day *unlike* the other six. The Sabbath is for spending time with God, with fellow believers (Leviticus 23:3), and for hearing the Word of God. God's Sabbath is a day for denying the selfish desires of the sinful nature. (Isaiah 58:13,14)

Most of us who observe the seventh day as a holy day, find it awkward and difficult at times to deal with the ways of the world, even when living within a Christian culture and heritage. Those of us living in the United States have enjoyed religious freedom for a long time, and it is sobering to think that persecution is coming when the seven-headed beast appears. If we add the pressures of social stigma and the hostile consequences that can come for being a Sabbath

keeper, some Christians think that it is best to just leave the Sabbath issue alone. It is easier “to go along and get along” than to lose a job, a spouse, and perhaps become a social outcast within your own family. However, Jesus said, **“If anyone loves Me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love Me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent Me.”** (John 14:23,24)

3. **Sinful nature.** The biggest hurdle for all mankind regarding God’s seventh day Sabbath is our sinful nature. We are *naturally* opposed to doing whatever God commands. Paul wrote, **“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.”** (Romans 8:5-7)

When these three obstacles are combined they are formidable, but we can overcome the world through faith because Jesus overcame the world. (John 16:33) He will give every sinner the strength to do what is right, if we ask for it. This is where salvific faith comes into focus. Faith in God is required for everyone who desires salvation.

If you feel impressed by the Holy Spirit to embrace and enter into God’s Sabbath rest, pray about it and ask Jesus for the wisdom, strength, and courage to proceed. He rewards those who live by faith. (Hebrews 11:6) Jesus said, **“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”** (John 16:13,14)

This study concludes with the inspiring words of Oswald Chambers (1874-1917): “The moral law does not consider our weaknesses as human beings; in fact, it does not take into account our heredity or infirmities. It simply demands that we be absolutely moral. The moral law never changes, either for the highest of society or for the weakest in the world. It is enduring and eternally the same. The moral law, ordained by God, does not make itself weak to the weak by excusing our shortcomings. It remains absolute for all time and eternity. If we are not aware of this, it is because we are less than alive. Once we do realize it, our life immediately becomes a fatal tragedy. ‘I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died’ (Romans 7:9). The moment we realize this, the Spirit of God convicts us of sin. Until a person gets there and sees that there is no hope, the Cross of Christ remains absurd to him. Conviction of sin always brings a fearful, confining sense of the law. It makes a person hopeless‘...sold under sin’ (Romans 7:14). I, a guilty sinner, can never work to get right with God – it is impossible. There is only one way by which I can get right with God, and that is through the death of Jesus Christ. I must get rid of the underlying idea that I can ever be right with God because of my obedience. Who of us could ever obey God to absolute perfection?! We only begin to realize the power of the moral law once we see that it comes with a condition and a promise. But God never coerces us. Sometimes we wish He would make us be obedient, and at other times we wish He would leave us alone. Whenever God’s will is in complete control, He removes all pressure. And when we deliberately choose to obey Him, He will reach to the remotest star and to the ends of the earth to assist us with all of His almighty power.” (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest, The Law and The Gospel*, December 1)

For other Bible studies and information on the Sabbath and Sabbath observance, please visit our website: [www.wake-up.org](http://www.wake-up.org)



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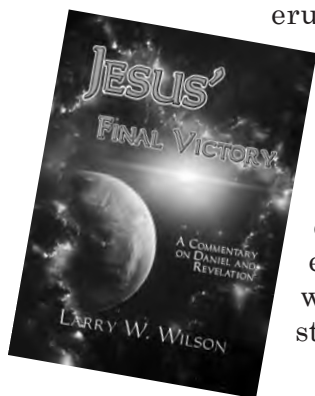
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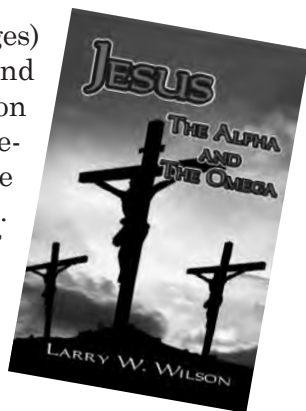
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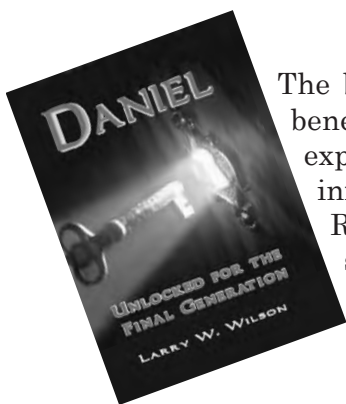
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Larry Wilson, Director of Wake Up America Seminars, became a born again Christian after returning from a tour of duty in Vietnam. His understanding of the gospel, the plan of salvation, and the atonement of Jesus Christ has thrilled his soul ever since. He has spent over 40 years intensely studying the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

In 1988, he published the first edition of this book and since then, has written several books (over 950,000 books in circulation throughout the world). Along with writing books, Larry Wilson 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 and is not 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.