

**The  
Revelation  
of  
Jesus  
(Continues)**

**Larry W. Wilson**



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of Jesus  
(Continues)

**Scriptural references are based on  
the New International Version  
and the King James Version.**

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**Larry W. Wilson**

# The Revelation of Jesus

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# Foreward

**This book is dedicated to those preparing for the immediate return of Jesus.**

Deepest appreciation is due my faithful wife of 22 years who took full-time employment so I could write this book, and after it was completed, sacrificed a very secure position so that she might help promote this wonderful message.

A special thanks is also due to many precious friends who made this ministry a reality. I must mention a few: Jan and Shelley Betts have been faithful companions in this ministry for many years. No job has been too hard, or any trip too long. If I could bestow sainthood, I'd start with them. Marty Purvis, CPA, has unselfishly spent many hours keeping our business matters in proper order. Were it not for Marty's efforts and wisdom, the business end of our operation would suffer. If I could bestow golden crowns, I'd start with him. Suzy Gray gave many hours to correct my typing in this volume. If you find a typo, it is because I added a few more words here and there after she fixed everything. If I could bestow harps, I'd start with her, for she always radiates a sweet spirit and encouragement. I could go on and on for many have generously given this ministry a very high priority in their daily activities and prayers. I have this joyful consolation: Jesus knows who did what and He will soon reward accordingly.

Larry Wilson  
July 1992

Through the years since Larry completed the second edition of this book, readers often requested that he update and revise it to include what he had learned in the 20 years since the second edition was published in 1992. Despite the many requests, there always seemed to be more important projects to complete, and the important date of 1994 was just a couple of years ahead. Larry began producing video programs and traveling around the US to present seminars. He wrote other books that provided more details about Revelation's story which culminated in his 600-page commentary on Daniel and Revelation. So, he never revised *The Revelation of Jesus* before his passing in 2021.

However, readers still requested we prepare a revision to this book. Many said *The Revelation of Jesus* was the book that stimulated their interest in Bible prophecy, others said it had changed their lives, and many more said it remained their favorite of all the books Larry wrote. Due to all the requests we received, last year I began revising and updating the book. This has been a challenging and life-changing experience. How does one update a book to reflect how Larry matured in his understanding of the apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation without losing the power of the first two editions?

I faced several challenges in preparing this edition. Larry had revised his position on issues like the identity of the two witnesses. Further, Larry had improved his writing skills, but what if Larry's writing style was what led people to appreciate the book? My hope and prayer is that our efforts to update this book have made the book easier to read, provided a deeper understanding of end-time prophecy, and will lead you into a closer walk with Jesus, our eternal savior.

Many friends helped in the revision of this book. In addition to the individuals Larry already thanked for their part in the earlier editions of *The Revelation of Jesus*, I especially appreciate Eunice Leach for her assistance as we worked on the draft. Rex Johnson and Donna Woods provided invaluable assistance as we prepared the book for publication.

Jesus is coming soon! I know this book will give you a wonderful perspective of His plans in the short time we have left. We owe thanks to the Lord for enabling His servant Larry to study and teach us an end-time message to share in these final days of earth's history.

Marty Purvis  
July 2025

# Preface

Wake Up America Seminars, Inc. is a nonprofit, nondenominational organization dedicated to spreading the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ. Because the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are about to be fulfilled, the words of apostle Paul particularly apply to our generation. He wrote, **“And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”**<sup>1</sup> Is it possible that the present generation will be the last generation to live on earth? Can rational individuals assert that the coming of Jesus is near when people have been repeating this message for almost 2,000 years? What evidence proves that Jesus will soon return?

These are fair and reasonable questions with two good answers. First, the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and certain historical events combine to provide reasonable evidence that Jesus is about to return. Unlike other kinds of prophecies, apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning point and an ending point in time. Apocalyptic sequences also contain events that allow us to mark the passage of time when the events occur. By understanding the sequences and identifying those parts that have been fulfilled, we can determine our chronological position within God’s great time clock.

Second, Matthew 24:4–12 reveals that false christs, wars, rumors of war, natural disasters, persecution, apostasy, false prophets, and depravity will increase to unthinkable levels before the end of the age. Few Christians today would disagree that we are living in the times Jesus described in Matthew 24.

Preparation for the second coming is all important. It is not enough to believe that Jesus is returning to earth, for the Devil knows this as well. It is not enough to understand the prophecies, for the Devil understands the

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1 Romans 13:11–12

prophecies too. It is not enough to belong to a church, for the Devil has infiltrated all religious systems in the world. We can only prepare for the second coming by receiving Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives. This means we need to follow the teachings of Jesus, which requires a lot of faith. Study your Bible, pray for understanding, share what Jesus reveals to you, love the Lord with all your heart, mind, and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself. Then, you will grow in grace — **“attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”**<sup>1</sup>

Truth is eternal and everlasting. It is my comprehension of truth that continues to grow. So, if this volume brings hope and salvation to just one person, my joy will be great.

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1 Ephesians 4:13



# New Truth in an Old Book

The Bible contains many prophecies. What do you think this one means? **“For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”**<sup>1</sup> What is apostle Paul talking about? When does this destruction happen? Who receives this destruction? How widespread is this destruction? What causes this destruction?

This prophecy is not isolated from other prophecies in the Bible. In fact, other prophecies of the Bible collaborate this statement by Paul to reveal the answer! The Bible not only predicts coming events but also provides the means to understand how the prophecies will be fulfilled. I have found a new mechanism that allows us to see how all end-time prophecies fit together in a harmonious way. Thus, Paul’s prophecy complements other end-time prophecies found throughout the Bible.

No book in the Bible holds more information about last-day events than the book of Revelation. This book contains an extraordinary story that will soon involve all eight billion people on earth. Even though most don’t understand what the Bible says about the imminent future, this is about to change. God has decreed that the gospel will go to every person before the end shall come.<sup>2</sup> Most scholars recognize that Revelation has an Old Testament partner in the book of Daniel. These two books combine to produce some very shocking predictions.

1. The Bible predicts that four *global* earthquakes are going to happen. The first earthquake will occur just before the Great Tribulation begins.

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1 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

2 Matthew 24:14

These earthquakes have no historical comparison—such will be their magnitude and coverage of earth.

2. Shortly after the first earthquake, a series of enormous wildfires will break out around the world. The Bible says that showers of burning hail will start these fires. This might happen when earth passes through the fragments left by a passing comet.
3. After the showers of burning hail, a great asteroid is going to impact one of earth's oceans. The resulting tidal wave will sink many ships; and many who live in cities along the coasts of that body of water will die.
4. Then, a great asteroid is going to impact the land mass of one of the earth's continents. The ground waves that follow the impact will sheer water wells and septic systems. Even worse, buried waste will leach into underground streams. As a result, aquifers deep in the earth will become contaminated and a large number of people will die as a result of drinking the water.
5. Then, darkness is going to cover a large portion of the earth. Perhaps the darkness will come from a chain of powerful volcanic eruptions on the Pacific rim. Millions of tons of ejecta could be blown into the heavens, blocking light from the sun, moon, and stars. Darkness will remain over a third of the earth, killing many crops. Famine will inevitably spread to all nations.
6. Rain will stop falling in some areas. Drinking water for man and beast will simply disappear.
7. In response to these calamities, governments will set aside democratic constitutions and implement martial law. A great spiritual awakening will follow. The authority and wrath of almighty God will become a household topic. Each nation will experience a serious revolution. Religious and political leaders will unite to seek ways to stop God's judgments. Every nation will implement laws regarding the establishment of religion; the consuming issue in every land will be, "How do we appease God so He will stop His awful judgments?"
8. Based on today's world population of 8.1 billion people, over 2 billion people will die in these horrific judgments.

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9. Economic chaos will accompany these global tragedies. As a result, governments will overnight implement rationing. Life as we now know it on our planet will suddenly change, and for most, these coming events are unexpected.
  10. Strangely, these horrific events will unite people. The basis of this union will be shared grief and loss of family, friends, and possessions. As the dust settles and those who remain struggle to survive, they will ask, “Why have these things happened? Why has God done this?” The truth will then be heard. People will widely agree that God exercised His wrath because His patience with our sinful ways has been exhausted.
  11. Next comes the most amazing event that the world has ever witnessed. Out of nowhere, a glowing and radiant being will appear; showing up in different cities and places around the world claiming to be “God Incarnate.” He will perform remarkable miracles and, to prove his divinity, even call down fire out of heaven before large numbers of spellbound observers. He will claim that he has come to save the world. He will claim responsibility for sending judgments to earth because of man’s intolerable level of wickedness. And, at this time, who can disagree?  
  
His purpose, he will claim, is to establish a new world order of righteousness; a government of peace and light. He will insist the prerequisites for this new world order are to be global repentance and reformation.  
  
Many Jews will receive this glorious being as Messiah. Many Protestants and Catholics will unite, believing this is none other than Jesus Christ himself. Many Muslims will receive him as the *Promised One* who is to restore their sovereignty. Many atheists, after witnessing his undeniable miracles, will acknowledge that he is God. Eastern mystical religions will claim that this being is a true manifestation of God. And the heathen, who have no formal knowledge of God, will recognize his superiority over all gods. Most of the world will recognize this glorious being as God.
  12. Capture this scene in your mind: Within a few months, horrific judgments will destroy the world’s infrastructures. The question of survival will be foremost in every mind. Grief, disease, famine, physical suffering, and mental anguish will be prevalent. Billions will have no hope. Everyone will need a savior—and right before their eyes will be one who claims

to be God. He will have spectacular powers to perform miracles and do great wonders to support his claim.

13. The Bible says this being is the fallen angel, Lucifer, God's ancient adversary. Almighty God will allow the Devil to impersonate Him for a short time. Paul calls Lucifer the *man of sin*.<sup>1</sup>
14. As the Devil gains millions and millions of followers, he will also gain control. His objective is to capture the world and force its inhabitants to worship at his feet as if he was God. The Bible predicts that the Devil will be successful in his bid for world dominion. His conquest will far exceed the grasp of Hitler. And like Hitler, the Bible also predicts that Satan will lead many to eternal destruction.

### New Technology for Prophetic Study

These are just a few of the predictions that will soon be fulfilled. All of them, and many more, can be found in the Bible only by using the new technology. This new technology is very powerful and interesting to use. It is also quite simple if you correctly understand a few of its elements. The new technology is not an electronic gizmo, for technology is not limited to tangible inventions; rather, it is a new process of prophetic interpretation.

The new technology consistently builds on events that qualify as prophetic fulfillments in the past as well as predictions about the future. Even more, this new technology allows people from all walks of life to reach *similar* prophetic conclusions without collaboration. This is not to say that all students of prophecy will reach *identical* conclusions; but they will reach *similar* conclusions if they follow these rules. This means that for the first time, people can now understand the essential prophecies of the Bible *for themselves*.

This new process of interpretation is revealed in four laws governing prophetic interpretation. Even though you may not understand the necessity and purpose of these laws, a brief introduction now will prove useful later. The laws governing the interpretation of apocalyptic prophecies are:

- 1. Each apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning and ending point in time, and the events within each prophecy occur in the order they are given.** (Timing)

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2

2. **A prophecy or prophetic element is not fulfilled until all the specifications of the prophecy are met—including the order of the events given within the prophecy.** (Fulfillment)
3. **Apocalyptic language can be literal, symbolic, or analogous. One must consider the context and use of parallel language in the Bible. When symbolic language is used, a relevant text that defines the symbol must be found to reach the intended meaning of a passage.** (Language)
4. **The presence or absence of the Jubilee Calendar determines how God measures time. If a prophetic time period occurs during the Jubilee Calendar (1437 BC – 1994), a prophetic day for a year applies; otherwise, the prophetic days are literal time.** (Timing)

These rules only apply to *apocalyptic* prophecy. The word *apocalyptic* comes from the word apocalypse which refers to Jewish and Christian prophecies regarding an imminent cataclysm. The Bible presents these prophecies in Revelation and Daniel. The book of Revelation is often called “The Apocalypse.” Many people think it is an important divine revelation of the future, but what does it say? How do we solve its mystery?

Whether the subject is mathematics, genetic research, or Bible prophecy, rules are necessary to solve the unknown. In fact, the fundamental purpose of cancer research is to discover the rules by which cancer operates. The same is true in math. For example, we can only solve the problem  $3x = 6$ , by using rules that allow us to manipulate the equation. In this case,  $x$  equals 2. The important point is that the unknown can become known only by using rules.

A rule in Bible prophecy is like a rule in mathematics. A rule is something that is always true. The interesting thing about rules is that human beings cannot make them up, we can only discover them. In other words, Sir Isaac Newton did not make up the rule of gravity. He discovered the rule and wrote an equation expressing how the rule operates. The same is true of apocalyptic prophecy. We cannot make up the rules of interpretation. We can only discover the rules, and then express the result by applying the rules to the texts at hand. The result is called an interpretation.

Rules of interpretation are indispensable to prophetic study. Here’s why. If we have no consistent method of explaining prophecies from the past, we cannot consistently explain prophecies about the future. Therefore, we

must *first* demonstrate that the rules work for those portions of prophecy that have been historically fulfilled before we can apply the rules to those portions of prophecy that are yet future.

### **Understand for Ourselves**

Because we live at a time when knowledge is increasing exponentially, it is almost impossible to keep up with discoveries in any single field. Some say that the half-life of knowledge today is less than three years. This means that if you knew everything that is known today, in three years, you would only know half of what would be known.

Because the growth of knowledge has been so explosive this century, we have seen the rise of specialists in every field of study. Lawyers specialize in insurance claims, criminal law, constitutional law, corporate law, and many other fields. Physicians specialize in cardiology, pulmonary functions, urology, pediatrics, endocrinology, and multiple other specialties. When it comes to Bible study, we also find many specialists. To name a few, there are Old Testament and New Testament scholars, Hebrew and Greek scholars, Pauline scholars, and church history scholars. And yes, there are prophecy scholars too, for specializations never end.

Here is a pestiferous problem. It seems that no one scholar of prophecy agrees. Everyone is saying something different. The biggest reason there is so much disagreement on prophecy is that few expositors consistently follow rules of interpretation. Because rules of interpretation are not written in the Bible, they can only be discovered through careful study. Understand that the study of prophecy is made up of two parts: one part history and one part future solving. The history part requires matching historical events with predictions to demonstrate a fulfillment of prophecy. The future-solving part refers to applying the rules of interpretation to identify what the next prophetic event will be.

The public is rightly dubious about prophecy scholars. Too many *experts* reveal their predictions as a scene of interest develops. If they truly were experts at prophecy, they would be able to predict *today* what the news headlines will declare *tomorrow*. After all, the Bible has been around for thousands of years!

For example, when nations wage war in the Middle East, *prophecy experts* show up on podcasts and talk shows. One commentator noticing

this phenomenon said, “Every time there is a national emergency, apocalypse people crawl out of the woodwork.” So, this question is valid: If the most recent war in the Middle East were a prophetic fulfillment, shouldn’t prophecy scholars have predicted the war, the participants, and its outcome a few years before it happened?

Future telling always intrigues people. Recently, a special TV show featured a 16th-century French astrologer named Michel de Notredame (Nostradamus). The program attempted to verify that Nostradamus was a genuine future teller by comparing some of his predictions with so-called fulfillments. However, the more ambiguous the prediction, the weaker the veracity of fulfillment. Nostradamus was not a seer—no matter how convincingly he may be portrayed. Like Nostradamus though, the future continues to play on our minds. What does the future hold? As economic circumstances grow more desperate, the question becomes more intense.

### **Become Serious About Bible Study**

Most people dismiss the importance of prophetic Bible study for three reasons. First, the study of prophecy is complicated. Who has time for more complications these days? Second, we can’t do anything about past fulfillments anyway. What happened in the past doesn’t seem relevant right now. And last, the whole subject is slippery. No future teller can prove that his conclusions about the future are true, for it is impossible to prove something that hasn’t happened. So, why get serious about studying Bible prophecy?

One reason to get serious about Bible prophecy is like a gold mine; the Bible contains valuable but hidden treasure. The Holy Spirit has led men and women through the ages to discover precious truths hidden within the Bible. Each new discovery has lifted the saving power of Jesus Christ to new heights. The Bible tells us of our origin, our purpose, and our destiny. It tells us that man needs God—God does not need man. It tells us that God loves man and man rarely loves God. In addition, the Bible tells us that this world and its problems are not going to last indefinitely. There is an end. Jesus is coming back to gather His people. During the Great Tribulation, when every means of earthly support is taken away from mankind, people will want serious answers about God. The answers will have to come from the Bible. This is why Bible study, especially prophetic study, is so necessary now.

New technology reveals that the end is almost here. When the world is turned upside down by calamities, and when the terrible predictions of Revelation commence, the opinions of scholars will avail us nothing. We must know for ourselves what the Bible says. That is why I've written this book. I want to help people understand the meaning of Bible prophecy for themselves. If salvation is a personal experience in trusting Jesus, then a study of His Word requires the same.



# The Purpose of Bible Prophecy

Bible prophecy is a broad and comprehensive subject. Those who study prophetic events study the deep things of God. Many people regard the Bible as the *Good Book* because the Bible promotes nobility, generosity, and righteousness—all those good qualities that bring happiness and joy. But the Bible is much more than a *Good Book*! The Bible exists to ultimately reveal what God is like! The Bible tells us what our Creator wants of us and why; it also tells us what His plans are! If we know what He is like, and we know what He wants, then we can make an informed decision about whether we want to love Him.

God gave prophecy so we could trust in Him. He says, **“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.”**<sup>1</sup> **“What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.”**<sup>2</sup> Jesus told His disciples, **“I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am.”**<sup>3</sup>

Prophecy is an important component in the Plan of Salvation. The Bible teaches that salvation comes by faith in Jesus—but how can we have faith in someone we haven’t seen? How can we love someone we don’t know? God does not ask us to place our faith in Him without first giving us reasonable evidence that He is trustworthy. Prophecy is a prediction of what God said He would do, and history is a confirmation of what He has done. Thus, prophecy is a light that shines into the dark uncertainty of tomorrow. When rightly understood, prophecy demonstrates and explains God’s

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1 Isaiah 46:9–10

2 Isaiah 46:11

3 John 13:19

character. Peter said, **“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”**<sup>1</sup>

Prophecy also serves an important secondary purpose. It serves as a road map for Bible students. By understanding God’s plans, students of His Word know when and how to prepare! They know what to look for. For example, God told Noah to build an ark because He planned to destroy the world with a flood. Noah obeyed, built an ark, and saved his family.

### **Spiritual Truth Decay**

Spirituality has decayed in America for the same reason it decayed in ancient Israel. We have forgotten God. Notice the parallels in modern America with Hosea’s day. Hosea said, **“Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land. ‘There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.’”**<sup>2</sup> **“My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge”**<sup>3</sup> **“But they do not realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are always before me.”**<sup>4</sup> **“The days of punishment are coming, the days of reckoning are at hand. Let Israel know this. Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person a maniac.”**<sup>5</sup> **“They [My people] make many promises, take false oaths and make agreements; therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field.”**<sup>6</sup>

When people lose sight of God, the quality of life deteriorates quickly. The evidence is all about us. “If I were called upon to identify briefly the

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1 2 Peter 1:19–21

2 Hosea 4:1–2

3 Hosea 4:6

4 Hosea 7:2

5 Hosea 9:7

6 Hosea 10:4

principal trait of the *entire* 20th century, here too, I would be unable to find anything more precise than to reflect once again on how we have lost touch with our Creator. *Men have forgotten God.*” Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Templeton Address*, May 10, 1983.

### **Scoffers, Famines, War, and Earthquakes**

According to the Bible, what will be the signs of the end of the world? **“Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’”**<sup>1</sup> These verses deal with a certain amount of justified skepticism. Christians have been saying for almost 2,000 years that Jesus is coming *soon* and He hasn’t come yet. So, how can they go on saying such things and appear rational? What evidence proves that Jesus is *soon* to come? Doesn’t the passage of millenniums indicate the continuation of millenniums?

**“Jesus answered: ‘Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, “I am the Messiah,” and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.’”**<sup>2</sup> Notice that wars, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes must happen, but the end is still to come. So again, we must ask ourselves, how can we know if we are living at the end of the world?

Paul told Timothy, **“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.”**<sup>3</sup> Sounds like Paul just read today’s news, doesn’t it? Are people becoming better or worse? What do you think?

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1 2 Peter 3:3–4

2 Matthew 24:4–8

3 2 Timothy 3:1–5

### Persecution is Inevitable

Scoffers will ridicule those who believe in and hope for Jesus' imminent return. Paul wisely warned Timothy saying, **"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."**<sup>1</sup>

Jesus warned His disciples that religious leaders are often hardhearted. They can't deal with advancing truth. He predicted, **"They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God."**<sup>2</sup> But, Jesus insisted, **"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."**<sup>3</sup>

Because most of the world does not know the Father or love God, we face perilous times. Paul draws a detailed picture of people living in the last days, saying, **"They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."**<sup>4</sup>

### Having Ears That Hear

There is more to understanding prophecy than meets the eye. To the casual reader, the Bible can be made to appear inconsistent and contradictory. However, those who diligently search the Scriptures with an open mind will find great beauty and harmony within, for the Bible offers a harmonious message. The Bible may have 40+ writers, but it has just one Author. The biggest problem we face with Bible study is that some things must be believed before they can be understood, and other things must be understood before they can be believed. Each serious Bible student knows

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1 2 Timothy 3:12

2 John 16:2

3 Matthew 5:11–12

4 Romans 1:29–32

that some answers are revealed over a long time. However, we know that faith and truth always meet in the end. For this reason, we must be willing to do some thinking to find possibilities for the right answers.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, **“Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”**<sup>1</sup> In Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus says seven times, **“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches”** This phrase means that those who listen for God’s voice will hear and understand what the Holy Spirit says!

Unfortunately, some people don’t want to hear the Word of God. Jesus said, **“Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.”**<sup>2</sup> The apostle Paul wrote, **“The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.”**<sup>3</sup> Even more, Daniel wrote about the last days, **“Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.”**<sup>4</sup>

The Holy Spirit operates in complete harmony with the truth contained in the Bible. If there is some part of the Bible you do not understand, you are part of a great group of honorable men and women. No person can know everything in the Bible. Like God’s love, the Bible is too broad, too deep, and too large to understand completely. However, God requires a willing attitude to understand His truth so that we can mature in spiritual matters.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Gift of Prophecy**

The ability to prophesy is a spiritual gift that comes from the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> Prophetic understanding is also a gift we should eagerly desire. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, **“Follow the way of love and eagerly**

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1 John 8:47

2 John 3:20–21

3 1 Corinthians 2:14

4 Daniel 12:10

5 Hebrews 5:11–6:1

6 1 Corinthians 12:28

**desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.**<sup>1</sup> We should desire the gift of prophecy because **“The one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.”**<sup>2</sup>

Prophecy is much more than future telling. Suppose you knew what the future held. What would that knowledge do for you? Would you be dedicated to encouraging others to prepare for coming events? Would you suffer the reproach of family and friends to proclaim an unpopular message? If there is anything that Bible history teaches, it is that the life of a prophet is usually difficult and spartan, and most often, it ends in an untimely death.<sup>3</sup>

### **False Prophets**

The Bible indicates that every future teller is not a true prophet. **“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”**<sup>4</sup> Jesus warned His disciples, **“For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”**<sup>5</sup> So, if a great sign or miracle is not proof of truth or a true prophet, what is? The bottom line has to do with obeying God’s Word. If a prophet encourages you to disobey God’s plain commands, you can be sure that he is not of God. **“This is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.”**<sup>6</sup>

### **Test the Prophets**

How do we test the prophets to determine if they are true or false? Moses told the children of Israel, **“If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, ‘Let us follow other gods’ (gods you have not known) ‘and let us worship them,’ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the Lord your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold**

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1 1 Corinthians 14:1

2 1 Corinthians 14:3

3 Matthew 23:37

4 1 John 4:1

5 Matthew 24:24

6 1 John 5:3

**fast to him. That prophet or dreamer must be put to death for inciting rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. That prophet or dreamer tried to turn you from the way the Lord your God commanded you to follow.”<sup>1</sup>**

### **Wrong Conclusions and Sad Consequences**

If we use faulty methods or faulty rules of interpretation, we will produce faulty conclusions. Study the following prophecy found in Malachi and notice how the experts interpreted it in Jesus’ day. Even more, observe the outcome.

**“See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction”<sup>2</sup>**

God gave the prophecy to Malachi about 350 years before Jesus was born. The Jews interpreted this prophecy to mean that Elijah would *personally* come down from heaven and introduce the Messiah when He arrived! God took Elijah to heaven in a whirlwind some 500 years before Malachi wrote these words.<sup>3</sup> This prophecy demonstrates two interesting points:

According to Luke 3:1, 15, the Jews anticipated that the Messiah would arrive during the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar. The Jews were not alone! Even the Samaritans anticipated the Messiah would come!<sup>4</sup> Israel expected the Messiah would come that year because Daniel had prophesied that Messiah would appear at the beginning of the 70th week!

In AD 27, a strange and powerful man that many recognized as a prophet appeared, which increased their expectation of a soon-coming Messiah. John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing by the Jordan River. People went out to hear him for he spoke with unusual power. His message cut through the facade of cultural religiosity, and people were *pricked in their hearts* because of their sins. There was something different about John the Baptist, and as his popularity grew, so did the jealousy of the religious leaders in Jerusalem.

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1 Deuteronomy 13:1–5

2 Malachi 4:5–6

3 2 Kings 2:11

4 John 4:25

One day the *Religious Affairs Department* in Jerusalem sent priests out to the Jordan River to question this man who was causing such interest. Their first question to John was, “Are you Messiah?”

John answered, “No.” Then they asked if he was Elijah.

Again, John answered, “No.” Then they asked if he was the prophet that Moses had predicted.<sup>1</sup>

John again said, “No.”

Then in desperation, they asked, “Who are you?”

John answered by quoting from Isaiah 40:3, saying, **“I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”**<sup>2</sup>

Satisfied that John the Baptist was neither the Messiah, Elijah, nor the prophet Moses predicted, the priests returned to Jerusalem with their report. The problem with this investigation of John is that the Jewish leaders later refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah *because* Elijah had not descended from heaven to herald the arrival of Messiah as predicted by Malachi! In other words, prophecy did not unfold the way they thought it should. Therefore, Jesus could not be the Messiah. Look again at the prophecy of Malachi. Would you have doubted that Jesus was indeed the Messiah if Elijah had not appeared?

The second point is that we can only reach accurate prophetic conclusions through the combined harmony of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. After Peter, James, and John saw Jesus visit with Elijah and Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration, they came to Jesus and asked about the prophetic argument which the Pharisees used against Jesus. They asked, **“Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”**<sup>3</sup> Jesus responded, **“To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist”**<sup>4</sup>

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1 Deuteronomy 18:15

2 John 1:23

3 Matthew 17:10

4 Matthew 17:11–13

Was John the Baptist the promised Elijah? The answer is yes and no. No, John the Baptist was not the physical person of Elijah for John was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. But yes, John the Baptist was a *type* of Elijah. Notice what the angel said to John’s father, Zechariah, before John was born, **“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”**<sup>1</sup>

### Jesus Applies the Prophecy

Jesus clearly understood the importance of John’s work. He said, **“Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”**<sup>2</sup> **“And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”**<sup>3</sup>

There’s that phrase again, **“Whoever has ears, let them hear.”** Notice that Jesus said, **“If you are willing to accept it, he [John the Baptist] is the Elijah who was to come.”** In other words, the prophecy of Malachi was not fulfilled by John the Baptist—the fulfillment of the prophecy was still to come. But John the Baptist was a representative of those who will “prepare the way of the Lord” when the time of the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives. God’s messengers at the end time will go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to announce the coming of Messiah just like John the Baptist! Understand that the prophecy of Malachi still awaits fulfillment. (Review Rule 2 on page 13.)

### The Prophets Speak

When is the great and dreadful day of the Lord, foretold by Malachi? Notice what many Bible writers have revealed about that day:

Amos said, **“Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him.”**<sup>4</sup>

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1 Luke 1:17

2 Matthew 11:11

3 Matthew 11:14–15

4 Amos 5:18–19

Isaiah said, **“See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.”**<sup>1</sup>

Ezekiel said, **“For the day is near, the day of the Lord is near—a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.”**<sup>2</sup>

Joel said, **“Alas for that day! For the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.”**<sup>3</sup> **“The Lord thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obeys his command. The day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?”**<sup>4</sup> **“The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”**<sup>5</sup>

Obadiah said, **“The day of the Lord is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.”**<sup>6</sup>

Zephaniah said, **“The great day of the Lord is near—near and coming quickly. The cry on the day of the Lord is bitter; the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry.”**<sup>7</sup>

Peter said, **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”**<sup>8</sup>

Many Scriptures distinctly point to the second coming of Jesus as the predicted great and dreadful day of the Lord! Notice what John says about that day of our Lord’s wrath. **“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made**

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1 Isaiah 13:9–11

2 Ezekiel 30:3

3 Joel 1:15

4 Joel 2:11

5 Joel 2:31

6 Obadiah 1:15

7 Zephaniah 1:14

8 2 Peter 3:10

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of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?’”<sup>1</sup>

The weight of evidence shows that the great day of the Lord is yet future; and so is the promise of Elijah because the prophecy of Malachi has to do with the great day of the Lord. One more point. Because Jesus described the work of John the Baptist as that of Elijah, we can anticipate that those who fulfill this prophecy will be to the second advent what John was to the first.

### **Five Types of Prophecy**

The Bible presents five distinct types of prophecy.

#### **1. Messianic Prophecies**

These prophecies specifically relate to the person of Jesus in either His first or second coming. Two excellent examples of Messianic prophecy are found in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.

#### **2. Judaic Prophecies**

These prophecies relate to promises of prosperity or destruction for Israel. Most of the time these prophecies contain conditional elements. A good example of this type of prophecy is found in Deuteronomy 28. Judaic prophecies contain important object lessons and principles because they clearly reveal God’s beneficent relationship with all generations.

#### **3. Day of the Lord Prophecies**

These prophecies are scattered throughout Scripture and refer to the vindication of God and/or His people. Elements within these prophecies are often general and may have parallel applications at different times. Ultimately, these prophecies predict the triumph of God and/or the vindication of His people in a contemporary setting. For example, Isaiah 24 and Ezekiel 7 contain parallels between the final days of Israel and the final days

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1 Revelation 6:12–17

of earth's history. Sometimes, *Day of the Lord* prophecies have conditional elements embedded in them if they are given as a warning.

Matthew 24 is a *Day of the Lord* prophecy. The prophecy concerning the end of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the end of the world are mingled because there are ominous parallels between them.

#### **4. Local Prophecies**

Local prophecies apply to specific people, places, and times. For example, the prophecy concerning Nineveh was a local prophecy. Local prophecies usually require a local prophet or messenger to explain or proclaim the prophecy. In the case of Nineveh, Jonah was the local prophet. John the Baptist was also a local prophet. His message was directly connected to the first advent of Christ. However, certain principles of John's message are applicable today as we approach the second advent.

#### **5. Apocalyptic Prophecies**

I define apocalyptic prophecies as structural prophecies; that is, prophecies that outline a specific sequence of events. An apocalyptic sequence is identified by having a beginning and an ending point in time. Both the fulfillment and sequence of apocalyptic prophecy are unconditional. Daniel 2 provides a clear example of this type of prophecy. Nebuchadnezzar's vision outlines a sequence of kingdoms that must occur in the order given.

Sometimes, the sequence or structure of apocalyptic prophecy is defined by numeric order. For example, the second trumpet in Revelation 8 occurs *after* the first trumpet. The critical point is that chronological order is always maintained in an apocalyptic prophecy; otherwise, we could not know the chronological order of events.

Apocalyptic prophecies sometimes have conditional elements within their structure relating to fulfillment. For example, the winds of destruction are held back in Revelation 7:3 until the servants of God are sealed. An unconditional element of this prophecy is that the winds will blow; *when* they blow is conditional.

#### **Apocalyptic Structure**

An apocalyptic prophecy is a prophecy that deals with a sequence of events. It predicts a certain sequence or order in which events will occur. By comparing history with fulfilled prophecies, we can determine our

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chronological position in the sequence. Even more, by carefully following consistent rules of interpretation, we can expect certain processes or events that will occur in the future. I understand that the four rules of interpretation listed on page 13 apply to apocalyptic prophecy in the following ways.

1. The books of Daniel and Revelation contain 17 apocalyptic stories or sequences. These mark the passage of time so we can tell where we are in God’s timetable. Each prophecy has a beginning point and ending point in time and the events in each prophecy occur in the order given. By knowing the beginning and ending points of a sequence, we can find our chronological relationship within them. Because apocalyptic prophecies have a beginning and ending point in time, they cannot have multiple fulfillments. An apocalyptic sequence can only occur once.
2. All prophecies of the Bible are subordinate to apocalyptic structure. This means that apocalyptic prophecy holds greater weight in terms of chronology than non-apocalyptic prophecies. For example, we read earlier that Amos, Ezekiel, Joel, Obadiah, and New Testament prophets believed the great day of the Lord was soon. There’s no question that what they saw in vision led them to conclude that the day of the Lord was near. In Revelation, John also indicated that the fulfillment of the events he saw was near or soon. The problem is that the prophets did not understand how their visions fit into the overall chronology of apocalyptic structure; God had not finished revealing the truth about the great day of the Lord. No one prophet was shown *everything* God intends to fulfill. Paul sums up the process of prophetic revelations saying, **“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways.<sup>1</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part.”<sup>2</sup>** In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways. Each time God spoke to a prophet about the end of time, He provided more detail. If we understand apocalyptic structures, then we can put the details from multiple prophets in place! So, the second rule then follows. A prophecy or an element within the prophecy is not fulfilled until all the specifications of the prophecy are met, and this includes the order of events within the prophecy.

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1 Hebrews 1:1

2 1 Corinthians 13:9

3. Obscure language within the apocalyptic structures clears up about the time the prophecy becomes applicable. In other words, when the prophecy becomes applicable, the language of the prophecy becomes meaningful. For example, John begins Revelation by saying, “**The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.**”<sup>1</sup> Obviously, John did not have 2,000 years in mind when he wrote “**must soon take place.**” Words must mean what they say, or we will not be able to understand the prophetic story. The point that God impressed on John was that Revelation’s story was about to be fulfilled. However, John did not know that in God’s timing, the language of Revelation would become meaningful and applicable nearly 2,000 years later when Revelation’s story is about to be fulfilled! This may seem confusing at first. But understand that God put the apocalyptic prophecies in mystical language to hide their meaning until the time for fulfillment. So, our third rule is this: Apocalyptic language can be literal, symbolic, or analogous. To determine which, we must consider the context and use of parallel language found in the Bible; if symbolic, a relevant text must describe the symbol. Students cannot make up interpretations of symbols. The Bible must interpret itself.
4. Bible students have different opinions regarding the measurement of prophetic time. God uses time in apocalyptic prophecy in two ways. A day in prophetic time could mean one literal day or a year. The fourth rule of apocalyptic prophecy states that the Jubilee Calendar determines whether a prophetic day is to be considered literal time or as a day for a year. I understand the Jubilee Calendar extended from 1437 BC to AD 1994, so prophetic dates after 1994 should be translated as literal time. Without this measurement change, the thousand years of prophetic time in Revelation 20:3 would be 365,000 years, an untenable length.

Consider the significance and importance of these four rules as we apply them in this book.

### Summary - Elijah is Still Coming

The world has yet to see the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy since it involves the great day of the Lord. Revelation predicts that 144,000 individuals, having the spirit and power of Elijah just like John the Baptist,

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1 Revelation 1:1

will herald the coming of the Lord. It will be interesting to see whom God chooses for His work!

There is an important distinction between an application and a fulfillment. Jesus *applied* the day of the Lord prophecy in Malachi to John the Baptist because John was a *type* of what the real fulfillment will be. In addition, this prophecy is not an apocalyptic prophecy because an apocalyptic prophecy lays out a sequence of events that must happen in chronological order. Because an apocalyptic prophecy can only happen once, a fulfillment can only occur when all the specifications of the prophecy are met.



## Chapter 3



# Who is Jesus?

The Bible begins, **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”**<sup>1</sup> The first verse in the Bible introduces our Creator and, in English, we call Him God. Who is God? What is He like? The Bible reveals information about our Creator that cannot be found in any other place. However, the Bible is limited because humans cannot adequately describe an infinite and omnipotent God on paper. For this reason, God commissioned the Holy Spirit to help us *connect the dots* so we could know what God is like. Jesus said, **“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the 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 glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.”**<sup>2</sup>

It takes time to understand what a person is like. For this reason, God chose to reveal himself over a long period—to various generations of people—and have His actions written down in the Bible. By doing this, those wanting to know God can become acquainted with Him by reconciling *all* His actions recorded in the Bible over many centuries. Because we can only know God through His actions, it is important to know that God is forever consistent. **“I the Lord do not change.”**<sup>3</sup> Paul states, **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”**<sup>4</sup>

### Man Learns About God

From time to time, God revealed himself to men and women in various ways. Paul encouraged Timothy to heed the Scriptures saying, **“All Scrip-**

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1 Genesis 1:1

2 John 16:13–14

3 Malachi 3:6

4 Hebrews 13:8

ture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”<sup>1</sup> Peter further explained the term *God-breathed*. “For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>2</sup> The Bible offers more than just human speculation about God. Instead, the Holy Spirit gave Bible writers special information or revelations of God. “When there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams.”<sup>3</sup>

### The Library

The Bible is a library of 66 books. It was written by 40+ authors over a period of about 15 centuries. There are 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament books. The Old Testament was completed with Malachi’s book about 350 years before Christ, while the 27 books comprising the New Testament were collected and approved as the New Testament about 350 years after Christ.

### Coming to Terms with Terms

We must understand some simple but important matters regarding the Bible. First, the terms *Old Testament* and *New Testament* are terms that we use today to identify two sections of the Bible. The Old Testament was written before, and the New Testament was written after Christ lived on earth. Obviously, these terms were not used during the days of Jesus since the New Testament did not exist as a collection of writings until the fourth century.

When we hear the word Bible, we usually think of one book, but this is a modern concept. The Jews in Jesus’ day did not view the 39 books we call the Old Testament as one book. Rather, they were grouped like books in a library. The Jews referred to them as the Law, the Psalms (Songs), and the Prophets. Early Christians followed the same tradition.<sup>4</sup> As the Christian movement grew, a church council in Nicaea, about AD 350, collected and assembled the New Testament writings. Even though the council considered

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1 2 Timothy 3:16–17

2 2 Peter 1:21

3 Numbers 12:6

4 Luke 24:44–45

many writings by various authors, they only selected 27 additional books. This automatically classified the earlier Scriptures as the Old Testament.

Many people misunderstand the importance of the Old Testament saying it has no value or meaning for today's Christian Church. This is unfortunate. Remember what Paul wrote to Timothy about 300 years before the New Testament was even assembled: **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**<sup>1</sup> The *only* Scripture that existed when Paul wrote to Timothy is what we call the Old Testament!

The Scriptures were divided into three parts in Jesus' day. The Law (the books of Moses), the Psalms (including Proverbs and Song of Solomon), and the Prophets (such as Isaiah, Haggai, and Jeremiah). When Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount, He said, **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”**<sup>2</sup> Notice that Jesus was referring to the Scriptures! He spoke of the Law and Prophets—a title for the Scriptures. Again, at the close of His ministry, Jesus said to His disciples, **“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalm. Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.”**<sup>3</sup>

### Same God in Old as in New

The Old and New Testaments are inspired by the same Holy Spirit, have the same authority, and reveal the same God! John said, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.”**<sup>4</sup> **“He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He**

1 2 Timothy 3:16–17

2 Matthew 5:17–18

3 Luke 24:44–45

4 John 1:1–4

came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”<sup>1</sup>

These verses contain some profound information about Jesus. Consider that the Word came from the Father to live among us, was in a world that didn’t recognize Him, created everything, was with God, and has been God from the beginning. Many people get confused about the title, God. It may help to think of God as a last name. There is Father God, Son God, and Holy Spirit God. These three have the same last name and are equal in every way but have different roles.<sup>2</sup>

If you study John 1 carefully, you will discover it is packed with valuable information about Jesus—the Son God. After reading verse 14, we can exchange some words and reach a clearer understanding of Jesus. For example, wherever “Word” is used in John 1, replace it with “Jesus” and see how much clearer the verses are!

### **The God of the Old Testament is Jesus**

The Bible is very clear that Jesus was in heaven before He created the world.<sup>3</sup> Remember He wasn’t named Jesus until He was born in human form. So, we can’t refer to Jesus by His earthly name in the Old Testament. However, you might be surprised to learn that most references to God in the Old Testament are references to the person we now call Jesus! Here’s the evidence.

In Gethsemane, Jesus asked for His previous glory: **“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”**<sup>4</sup> Clearly, Jesus shared glory with the Father before the world was created.

Jesus told the Pharisees that the Scriptures focus on Him: **“And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me.** [The Father spoke

1 John 1:10–14

2 Matthew 28:19; John 15:26; 16:5–11; 17:1–5

3 John 1:2–3

4 John 17:5

at Jesus' baptism saying, '*This is my Son.*'] **You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.**"<sup>1</sup> The Old Testament Scriptures reveal Jesus!

Paul explains that Jesus is the creative agent within the Godhead. He writes, **"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe."**<sup>2</sup> Jesus is the *hands-on* Creator.

Notice this statement by Paul affirming that Jesus is the creative agent within the Godhead, **"For by him [Christ] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."**<sup>3</sup>

### Jesus Is God Like the Father

Paul says, **"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."**<sup>4</sup> **"He is the head over every power and authority."**<sup>5</sup> In Revelation, Jesus said to John, **"I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'"**<sup>6</sup>

John, as mentioned earlier says, **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."**<sup>7</sup>

Peter says, **"He [Jesus] was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."**<sup>8</sup>

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1 John 5:37–40

2 Hebrews 1:1–2

3 Colossians 1:16–17

4 Colossians 2:9

5 Colossians 2:10

6 Revelation 1:8

7 John 1:1–3

8 1 Peter 1:20

Isaiah quotes the Lord, saying, **“Listen to me, Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together.”**<sup>1</sup> **“This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.’”**<sup>2</sup>

Philip, one of the first disciples of Jesus, told his brother, **“We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”**<sup>3</sup>

It was Jesus who said to Abraham, **“I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless.”**<sup>4</sup> The Jews argued with Jesus because He claimed to be greater than Abraham but Jesus said, **“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”** The Jews sneered back, **“You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham! ‘Very truly I tell you,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’”**<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Old Testament writers knew Christ. The writer of Hebrews says, **“He [Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.”**<sup>6</sup> John knew that Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus. He says, **“Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.”**<sup>7</sup>

### Revelation of Jesus

The nature and identity of Jesus is a subject of revelation. In other words, the nature and identity of Jesus are only revealed in the Bible and this has been revealed over time. Early prophets did not know as much about Jesus as we know today. Notice how this progression works. **“God also said to Moses, ‘I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself fully**

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1 Isaiah 48:12–13

2 Isaiah 48:17

3 John 1:45

4 Genesis 17:1

5 John 8:56–58

6 Hebrews 11:26

7 John 12:41

**known to them.”**<sup>1</sup> The truth about Jesus is always unfolding. In fact, by the time we get to the last book in the Bible, it is appropriately called, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” Indeed, this is what Revelation is all about—the unfolding or revealing of Jesus Christ!

Going back to our verse, notice that God says that He did not reveal His name to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. Why do you suppose He did that?

### **So, Who is Jesus?**

Jesus is God Almighty.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus is the Lord God.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus is the Angel of the Lord.<sup>5</sup>

Jesus is our Creator.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus is our Redeemer.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus is our Friend.<sup>8</sup>

Jesus said to His disciples, **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that 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. You know the way to the place where I am going.”**<sup>9</sup> Do you think trust in God is different than trust in Jesus?

### **Jesus Lived as an Angel**

The role and identity of Jesus have not only been a mystery to human beings but also to angels! Before coming to earth as a man, Jesus lived in heaven as an angel. The angels called Him Michael, which means one who is like God. The name Michael is used in the Bible on five occasions. In Jude 9,

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1 Exodus 6:2–3

2 Exodus 6:3

3 Isaiah 48

4 Revelation 19:16

5 Exodus 3:2–6

6 John 1:10

7 Isaiah 48

8 John 15:13–15

9 John 14:1–4

Michael is called the archangel, and in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, the voice of the archangel calls the dead to life. In Daniel 10:13, Michael was called one of the chief princes of heaven. In Daniel 12:1, the Great Tribulation begins when Michael (seated at the right hand of the Father) stands up. Daniel appropriately identified Jesus as *Michael* and a *son of man*,<sup>1</sup> for he wrote about 600 years before *Michael* took the name of Jesus.

In Revelation 12:7, we find Michael and His angels fighting Satan and his angels. Both Michael and Satan were angel kings before the creation of the world. Michael was the archangel over the faithful angels, and Satan became ruler over his angel followers. Thus, the great controversy between Christ and Satan began before the world was created. *Each time the name Michael is used in the Bible, there is a conflict between Satan and Jesus.*

If we consider that Michael is Jesus, we can understand the real beauty that one member of the Godhead, Jesus, first lived in physical form as one of His own created beings. In other words, Jesus lived for many, many years as an angel, and He then stooped lower to live as a man. What divine love! He is Michael, the archangel, to the angels, and to us, He is Jesus the incomparable Son of Man!

Satan's problems with Michael began when he decided he would no longer bow to another angel. Satan felt in his heart that he was equal to, if not greater than, Michael.<sup>2</sup> The same problem recurred when Jesus was on earth. Many human beings saw Jesus as only a man and accused him of blasphemy when He said that He was the Son of God.

Some people resist the idea that Michael is another name for Jesus. They often use Jude 9, when Michael said to the Devil, "**The Lord rebuke you!**" to support this. They argue that if Michael is Jesus, He would not refer to the Lord as though He were another person. But this was a common literary practice in Bible times! Zechariah 3:2 said, "**The Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you!'**" using identical language. Jesus asserts His authority over the Devil from time to time by reminding the Devil who He really is. For example, when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus quoted from

1 Daniel 7:13

2 Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28

the Old Testament<sup>1</sup> saying, **“Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”**<sup>2</sup> Jesus clearly knew who He was, and so did the Devil. So, in the Jude 9 conversation between Jesus and Satan, Satan was reminded again that he was dealing with God.

Remember, each time the term Michael is used in the Bible, a controversy with Satan is underway!

One last fact should be emphasized. When Jesus returns in glory, He will call the righteous dead to life. Paul describes the event: **“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”**<sup>3</sup> The phrase, **“the voice of the archangel,”** emphasizes the role of Jesus, the archangel at the second coming. Notice what Jesus said about himself, **“Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.”**<sup>4</sup>

I believe that Michael, the archangel, closely identified with the angels before Lucifer’s fall; thus, they really didn’t understand all that He was. Christ’s identity in heaven as an angel, albeit the archangel, or one of the chief princes, was perhaps one of the reasons Lucifer became jealous of Christ. Lucifer, the highest of the created angels, began to think that he was equal to or better than Michael. These thoughts led Lucifer to controversy and eventually caused his expulsion from heaven.

If this is true, the phrase, the revelation of Jesus really comes into focus. The book of Revelation is the conclusion of a long process—the revelation of all that Jesus is! This process is true in heaven but also applies to us humans on earth! Everyone will know WHO JESUS REALLY IS when the seventh seal is finally opened! Every knee will bow and Michael/Jesus will destroy Lucifer/Satan.

### **Jesus, the Angel, the Lord, Is God**

Many people are surprised to learn that the Old Testament referred to Jesus as the angel of the Lord. When Abraham was about to offer Isaac

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1 Deuteronomy 6:16

2 Matthew 4:7

3 1 Thessalonians 4:16

4 John 5:25

as a sacrifice, the Bible says, **“But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, ‘Abraham! Abraham!’”<sup>1</sup> “Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said.”<sup>2</sup> “The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said. ‘I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.’”<sup>3</sup>**

The following example is even more convincing. One day when Moses was tending his sheep, he discovered a burning bush. The Bible says, **“There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, ‘I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.’**

**“When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’**

**“And Moses said ‘Here I am.’**

**“Do not come any closer,’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.’ Then he said, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’”<sup>4</sup> Both Bible references state that the angel of the Lord is God.**

The Bible leads us in small steps to understand all that Jesus really is. Did you know that Jesus tenderly cared for the Israelites in the wilderness? He was with them day and night. He provided them with water and food. Paul said, **“They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.”<sup>5</sup>**

When Jesus came to earth, He stooped lower in the order of creation. Paul asked, **“What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of**

1 Genesis 22:10

2 Genesis 22:12

3 Genesis 22:15–18

4 Exodus 3:2–6

5 1 Corinthians 10:3–4

man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor and put everything under their feet.”<sup>1</sup> **“But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”**<sup>2</sup>

The story of Revelation is devoted to the singular point of revealing all that Jesus is. This is why this book is named *The Revelation of Jesus*. When the last of the seven seals has been broken at the end of the millennium, the heavenly angels, the evil angels and the wicked on earth, and the redeemed will all see who Jesus really is. At that time, the revelation of Jesus will be complete!

After Jesus is totally revealed, He does something beyond our comprehension. Paul says, **“Then the end will come, when he [Jesus] hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.”**<sup>3</sup> **“When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.”**<sup>4</sup>

What a wonderful Savior Jesus is! Michael, the Son of God, was humble enough to live as an angel. Then, He stooped even lower to live as a man. Even more, He willingly died on Calvary to pay the penalty for our sins. Is it any wonder that Jesus said, **“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”**<sup>5</sup>

### Jesus, Rejected by His Own People

One of the most touching verses in the Bible is found in John 1:11. John says, **“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”** Jesus was literally the One who chose Israel, the One who delivered Israel from bondage, the One who fed Israel with manna from heaven, the One who cared for and blessed Israel, the One who sought the affections

1 Hebrews 2:6–8

2 Hebrews 2:9

3 1 Corinthians 15:24

4 1 Corinthians 15:28

5 Matthew 20:26–28

of Israel—yet He was the One rejected and crucified by His own people. What have you done with Jesus? Are you willing to be His servant? Are you willing to do what He asks? Are you willing to become what He wants you to be? Are you willing to go where He commands? If not now—when? If you are willing now, you are on the way to heaven. Read John 14:1–17:26. You'll be glad you did.



# The Plan of Salvation

“What must I do to be saved?” No question has ever provoked so many different answers. A few years ago, a Gallup poll was conducted about salvation. Eighty-seven percent of the people questioned were convinced that they were going to heaven, and almost ninety percent knew someone who was going to hell.

“What must I do to be saved?” is a universal question. People of every culture, language, and nation want to know. Have you noticed that each nation and tribe has a religion of some kind? Ask a Catholic, Baptist, Jew, Muslim, or Hindu this question and you’ll receive five different answers! Even more confusing is the fact that factions within each religious group will give different answers! Is there one correct answer? Is there only one way to heaven?

### **From Heaven’s Perspective**

Consider the issue of salvation from heaven’s point of view. There are multiple billions of people on this planet and according to the Bible, God is not willing that anyone should perish.<sup>1</sup> God foreknew that people on earth would speak different languages, have diverse customs, and think differently about religion. Therefore, God prepared a Plan of Salvation *before* creating the world that would encompass every human being who would ever live. Consequently, those who wish to understand the enormous scope of salvation must understand the powers of God.

God is omnipotent. This means that He can do anything He pleases with anything or anybody. He is not accountable to anyone, yet He is willing to be studied. He is the source of all authority and power, yet He gives His subjects the power of choice. He speaks and worlds materialize. He

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1 2 Peter 3:9

could double the size of our infinite universe in a split second by simply commanding it. He could speak Earth's solar system out of existence, and we would cease to be the very moment the words left His lips.

Through Him, everything exists. Without Him, there is nothing. He creates matter. He destroys matter. He sets limits and no one can change them. God says, **“This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself, who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense.”**<sup>1</sup> **“Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’ From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.”**<sup>2</sup>

God is omniscient. This means that He knows everything about all things. He knows everything about the past and the future. Before the world was created, God knew the names of those who would choose eternal life and who would not. In other words, God knew before the world began who would be saved and who would be lost.

This fact bothers a lot of people because they don't understand the difference between God's foreknowledge and His ability to predestine an event. According to the dictionary, predestination means to decree beforehand. Because the Godhead is omnipotent, they can predestine things. For example, Jesus was predestined to die on Calvary long before the event took place. God predestined the Plan of Salvation before the world was created. Predestination means that God decrees that certain events will occur for a specific reason.

Remember, God says, **“My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’ From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.”**<sup>3</sup> So, predestination is a function of God's

1 Isaiah 44:24–25

2 Isaiah 46:9–11

3 Isaiah 46:10–11

omnipotence. He can decree anything to happen beforehand, and it will happen because He is omnipotent.

On the other hand, foreknowledge is a function of God’s omniscience. Because He knows everything, He has foreknowledge. He knows what is going to happen—not because He makes it happen, but because He knows it will happen! God did not predestine Adam and Eve to sin, although He foreknew that they would sin. In the same way, He knows who will choose to be saved and who will choose to be lost. God has not predestined some to be lost and others to be saved. The Bible says, **“He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.”**<sup>1</sup> **“He [God] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”**<sup>2</sup>

To say that God predestines our eternal reward is false and a malicious charge against His Plan of Salvation. If God predestined the eternal reward of a man without recognizing man’s actions or power of choice, the Plan of Salvation would be a deceptive trick. If God predestined people to be saved and others to be lost, there would have been no need for the Plan of Salvation, for what effect could come from choosing Jesus as our Savior if you were predestined to be lost?

In simple terms, predestination (decreeing beforehand) is setting the alarm clock to go off at 5 am. Foreknowledge (knowing beforehand) is looking at a clock and observing that the alarm will sound at 5 am.

### **Difference Between Foreknowledge and Predestination**

There is an essential difference between God’s foreknowledge and God’s predestination. Predestination *causes* the outcome whereas foreknowledge *knows* the outcome. Perhaps another illustration will demonstrate this difference. Suppose an airplane pilot can see the twists and turns of a long river from a high elevation. In one glance, he can see the end *and* the beginning. Also imagine people are traveling down the river, not knowing where the river leads but determined to reach its end. The pilot can see where they will be when they reach the end of their journey, but it has nothing to do with the travelers reaching that destination. Rather, he can only see where the boaters will be when they reach the end of the river. Knowing the end

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1 Ephesians 1:5

2 2 Peter 3:9

from the beginning without making it happen is foreknowledge, whereas predestination causes an outcome.

God predestines *events*. He does not predestine the eternal destiny of people. God, because He has foreknowledge, knows what individuals are going to choose to do and He not only grants us the power of choice, but encourages us to use it!

### **God Predestines Events, Not People**

The Old Testament story of Israel highlights the fact that Jesus does not use His foreknowledge to change the outcome of events even when they run contrary to His righteous plans! Notice this prophecy, **“And the Lord said to Moses: ‘You are going to rest with your ancestors, and these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them. And in that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they will be destroyed. Many disasters and calamities will come on them, and in that day they will ask, “Have not these disasters come on us because our God is not with us?” And I will certainly hide my face in that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods.’”**<sup>1</sup>

Jesus knew what Israel would do in the future and 1,470 years of Jewish history confirm that Jesus was right. The same 1,470 years of Jewish history confirm that Jesus did not use His foreknowledge to prevent Israel from becoming a stubborn and stiff-necked people, although He knew they would rebel beforehand. In fact, the Old Testament verifies that God did everything possible to redirect Israel from her terrible ways—time after time!<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, Israel chose to rebel. God does not deal with His creatures based on His foreknowledge. He deals with us based on His love, our choices, and His complete insight into our ultimate needs. Carefully consider this point and you’ll stand in awe at God’s unmatched love!

### **Back to the Question**

The question, “What must I do to be saved?” implies a condition of being unsaved. What is the human race *unsaved* from? Life lasts about 70 years and then man dies. What follows? Why must man die? The Psalmist

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1 Deuteronomy 31:16–18

2 Jeremiah 3

wrote, **“Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.”**<sup>1</sup> The Bible gives a clear explanation of who man is, where he came from, why he dies, and all that follows.

### Watch What You Eat

God created man and placed him in the garden of Eden where he had access to the Tree of Life. If man remained in the garden he could live forever because the fruit of the Tree of Life sustained life indefinitely. Jesus created man as a mortal being subject to death. Jesus told Adam plainly, **“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”**<sup>2</sup>

Both the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil were in the middle of Eden.<sup>3</sup> These two trees shadow the Plan of Salvation. Jesus would die on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil so man could access the Tree of Life. When Jesus created Adam and Eve, they were sinless and had a natural attraction for righteousness and lawful living. As children today possess biological traits from their parents, so Adam and Eve possessed the traits of their creator—Jesus. The Bible says, **“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”**<sup>4</sup>

### A Test of Loyalty

Jesus placed a test in the garden of Eden to see if Adam and Eve would choose to obey or disobey. He told them they were not to eat the fruit of one tree in the middle of the garden. One day, as Eve went grocery shopping to get fruit from the Tree of Life, a serpent startled her by calling her from the forbidden tree. Now the serpent in the garden of Eden was the most beautiful and intelligent of all creatures. Some scholars believe the serpent could fly until he was cursed to crawl on his belly.<sup>5</sup> Apparently, Satan entered the body of one of the most beautiful creatures on earth to

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1 Psalm 90:10

2 Genesis 2:16–17

3 Genesis 2:9

4 Genesis 1:27

5 Genesis 3:14

tempt Eve. Wouldn't you be curious if you heard a beautiful creature speak and carry on a remarkably intelligent conversation?

Satan engaged Eve in a conversation and then lied to her. He deceived her into eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan said, **“You will not certainly die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”**<sup>1</sup> Satan led Eve to believe that God didn't want her to experience the knowledge of evil. This part of Satan's comment was true for God did not want Adam and Eve to have that experience. In fact, the Devil often mixes 99% truth with a 1% lie to capture his subjects. God knew that the knowledge of good was enough. Satan lied about the fatal consequences of evil and his clever mixture of error with truth is in the text above!

Eve ate the fruit. Then, she gave some of the forbidden fruit to Adam and he also ate it. Now an important distinction must be made between the sins of Adam and Eve. Eve believed a lie and she sinned without deliberation. Adam, on the other hand, willfully chose to eat the forbidden fruit and suffer the consequences. Therefore, Adam's sin was greater than Eve's. Remember, God had directly spoken to Adam about this matter. **“And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.’”**<sup>2</sup> Adam's sin was calculated and deliberate.

### Passing the Blame

That evening, Jesus confronted Adam and Eve with their sin. They ran and hid as Jesus came to visit with them. They were ashamed, naked, and defensive. When confronted with their deeds, they were strangely unrepentant! Eve blamed her act on the serpent. She said, **“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”**<sup>3</sup> Even worse, Adam blamed his act of rebellion on his Creator and then on Eve! Adam said, **“The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it.”**<sup>4</sup>

Then Jesus turned to Adam and said, **“Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not**

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1 Genesis 3:4–5

2 Genesis 2:16–17

3 Genesis 3:13

4 Genesis 3:12

eat of it, Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.”<sup>1</sup> “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”<sup>2</sup>

### Access Denied

Adam and Eve were driven from the garden of Eden so they would not have access to the Tree of Life! The Bible says, **“And the Lord God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the and eat, and live forever.’ So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”**<sup>3</sup>

Because of their sins, Adam and Eve were doomed to eternal death. **“For the wages of sin is death.”**<sup>4</sup> They had literally tasted sin and would forever be sinners. They were banished from the garden and denied access to the life-sustaining fruit of the Tree of Life, for God mercifully prevents sinners from living forever. The trait of rebellion against God (just like a biological trait) was passed on to the offspring of Adam and Eve. In fact, their firstborn, Cain, became a murderer!

Adam’s sin was greater than Eve’s sin. Adam was not deceived. He willfully and intentionally disobeyed God. Therefore, his suffering would be greater than Eve’s. The words of the apostle Paul make a lot of sense. **“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all have sinned.”**<sup>5</sup>

Think of Adam’s suffering. He lived 930 years.<sup>6</sup> Imagine living that long and observing the terrible consequences of your own wrongdoing! In every death, suffering, and sadness, Adam saw the consequences of his deed. He saw the blight of sin upon nature. For more than nine centuries, Adam witnessed the degenerate effects of his willful wrongdoing.

1 Genesis 3:17

2 Genesis 3:19

3 Genesis 3:22–24

4 Romans 6:23

5 Romans 5:12

6 Genesis 5:5

### Jesus Not Caught by Surprise

The sin of Adam and Eve did not catch heaven by surprise. The very day Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus stepped between the wrath of God and the guilty pair. Jesus came to earth and told Adam and Eve that there was a way back to Eden. And ever since that day, the way back to Eden has been called the Plan of Salvation.

Billions of inhabitants on earth are descendants of Adam and Eve, and God knew when He created the world that it would be populated with billions who have different languages, customs, and religious beliefs. The Plan of Salvation has been inclusive of all people from its beginning. It must work for individuals in China, Russia, India, America, and others in every country. How can billions of people holding diverse beliefs find their way back to Eden? Because God is love, the answer is quite simple. When each person is born, God instills a set of rules called basic law within them.

### Basic Law

Basic law allows a person to determine right and wrong. This indwelling law enables individuals to distinguish or recognize right from wrong at an early age, often called the age of accountability. People mature in the process of accountability as long as they seek truth. Thomas Jefferson eloquently noted this progression in the introduction of the U.S. Bill of Rights. He wrote, “We hold certain truths to be self-evident.” However, if people don’t want to see truth, they can’t understand the truth or grasp the evidence of it! In fact, those who justify evil are the first to deny what is right.

God created human beings with reasoning powers—He wants us to distinguish good from evil. If a person strives to do all that the Holy Spirit impresses upon him, then he is doing everything God asks of him. Paul says, “**(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law [the revealed will of God], do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) This [is how it] will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.**”<sup>1</sup> This text refers to the larger meaning of the word *law*, that is, all Scripture. James

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1 Romans 2:14–16

also supports the concept of basic law. He says, **“Anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.”**<sup>1</sup>

### Salvation Includes Full Restoration

The Plan of Salvation does not stop with *basic law*. On the contrary, basic law is where it all begins. Salvation consists of much more than the promise of eternal life because humanity lost more than eternal life. God wants to restore eternal life to all people and He especially wants to restore the traits of holiness, righteousness, and divine love within man. He wants us restored back to His image! To do this, God has patiently worked through the human race in various ways to inform man of what He is like—hoping that people would respond. In God’s economy, it is not enough to save man *in* his sins. God intends to save man *from* his sins.

So, the Plan of Salvation has two parts. Theologians have termed these as *justification* and *sanctification*. Justification means that God has personally paid the price for the salvation of everyone living in the world. Sanctification means that God wants to restore His image (traits) in all human beings. Sanctification works in two ways. First, holiness brings fullness of life, happiness, and never-ending joy. What a contrast to the wages of evil. Second, sanctification serves as public relations for the kingdom of heaven. Those who experience the joy and fullness of life that comes through sanctification become living examples of what heaven is all about. Thus, uninformed people are brought to a knowledge of the God of heaven through sanctified examples of what God offers.

Jesus wonderfully explained these two concepts of sanctification in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>2</sup> He said, **“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”**<sup>3</sup>

1 James 4:17

2 Matthew 5:3–7:29

3 Matthew 5:43–48

### How the Pieces Fit

Remember, we are born with reasoning powers sufficient for basic law. God grants us this ability to understand the difference between right and wrong. He appeals to this basic ability to reveal more and more light about himself. The more we know about our Maker, the more we become like Him!

Some people don't want more information about God and His ways. Jesus told Nicodemus, **“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.”**<sup>1</sup>

Alarmingly, entire cities, states, or nations can corporately rebel against truth! Jesus denounced Capernaum saying, **“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”**<sup>2</sup> In other words, Sodom's evil was not as great as Capernaum's evil because Capernaum had greater evidence of truth.

Some people want to know more about God. Others don't want to know anything about God. Jesus told Nicodemus that those who live up to all they know will find additional light while those who do evil will not want any more light for fear their deeds will be exposed as evil.

Salvation then comes to any person, in any culture, in any language, and in any religious body when they are willing to follow all the light they have. It's that simple and that universal. From basic law, God attempts to lead people into greater and greater light so they may become more like him.

### The Final Exam

Revelation indicates that God has prepared a final exam for all people of the world living at the end of time. He will soon send a powerful testimony of truth throughout the world to determine who will follow it. Those living

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1 John 3:19–21

2 Matthew 11:23–24

up to all the light they have and looking for more light will quickly see the beauty of this simple but powerful testimony. Many will accept it even at great peril to life itself.

This final exam is carefully designed so that all who are living up to the light they have will be separated from these three classes of people:

1. Those who refuse more light.
2. Those who profess to walk in the light.
3. Those who are indifferent to greater light.

### Sin Causes Death

Adam and Eve lost much and gained very little by sinning. They lost the privilege of eating fruit from the Tree of Life. Because they were mortal and restricted from the tree, death overtook them. They lost their beautiful Eden home. They lost the natural traits of God's righteous character, and in exchange for these things, they gained the knowledge of evil, suffering, and sorrow. But their greatest loss was holiness. After sinning, Adam and Eve became attracted to sin. What a sad exchange.

Adam and Eve passed their sinful natures on to their children and their firstborn became a murderer. Consequently, sin has damaged and contaminated every descendant of Adam and Eve. According to Paul, "**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God!**"<sup>1</sup> This is the fallen and unsaved condition of man. We may be unsaved, but we are wanted! God wants to redeem fallen mankind back to himself. "**For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**"<sup>2</sup> The penalty for sin is everlasting death. Jesus, our creator, personally paid this penalty so that whosoever will believe in Him might be saved.<sup>3</sup> What does *believe in Him* mean? How does a person receive salvation?

Earlier, we learned about basic law. This concept suggests that God has placed within each rational person the basic ability to distinguish right from wrong. People living up to the fullness of their heart's understanding of truth glorify their Creator! On the other hand, those refusing to learn more truth are not candidates for salvation.

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1 Romans 3:23

2 Romans 6:23

3 John 3:16

Some people don't want to know the difference between right and wrong. Why is this? Paul wrote, **"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles."**<sup>1</sup> **"Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done."**<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the ages, billions of people have lived and died who never knew the particulars about salvation. God foreknew the darkness of sin. Consequently, the Plan of Salvation can save a person who doesn't understand all the details. This is somewhat like the law of gravity. You don't have to understand gravity to be affected by its operation.

God is not content with basic law. He desires to restore His image within man. For this to happen, man needs to know his Creator. This calls for much more information and education about the Plan of Salvation. Jesus wants a close relationship with His children, and a close relationship is only possible when each party knows the other well.

### **Stage Set for Faith**

Now the stage for us to understand salvation has been set. Salvation has two parts: first, to restore man to Eden, and second, to restore within man the image of God. Jesus paid the price at Calvary for restoring man to Eden. Through God's grace or unmerited favor for humanity, the price was paid. That God could love us and pay such an extreme price for our salvation is grace beyond comprehension. It is also love beyond comprehension. Paul called this the mystery of God. He wrote, **"Although I am less than the**

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1 Romans 1:18-23

2 Romans 1:28

least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.”<sup>1</sup>

The process of restoring man to the image of God is exciting, rewarding, and excruciating—all at the same time. Our natural inclination or tendency is to be hostile toward God. Paul wrote, **“Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.”**<sup>2</sup>

Jesus told Nicodemus that a person could live in accordance with the Spirit and find life and peace. **“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”**<sup>3</sup> **“Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.”**<sup>4</sup> What does being born of water and the Spirit mean? Some people interpret Jesus’ words, “born of water,” to mean that unless you are baptized, you cannot go to heaven. In the late second century, a controversy developed within the Christian church over this matter. The issue was whether baptism was required for salvation. The church finally decided that it was compulsory. Since many infants died before reaching one year of age in those days, the church implemented the baptism of infants to ensure that they met the *mandatory* requirements of getting to heaven.

Being born of water, though, meant something different to Nicodemus than it typically means to us today. Being born of water was an expression that was associated with becoming a Jew. If a Gentile (a person not born of Jewish ancestry) wished to become a Jew, he had to submit to months of extended education on the rules and practices of Judaism. After indoctrination, the candidate denounced his past life and was dunked beneath the water. This symbolic act was known as being born of water. The Jews thought

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1 Ephesians 3:8–9

2 Romans 8:5–8

3 John 3:3

4 John 3:5

the act of baptism overcame the tragedy of being born a Gentile. As far as the convert was concerned, life began at baptism. Nothing between Gentile birth and baptism was worth remembering. Thus, being born of water was an expression of denouncing natural birth as a Gentile.

Nicodemus was well acquainted with John the Baptist. Remember, John the Baptist was baptizing at the Jordan River where there was plenty of water.<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit led John to use the symbol of being born of water to call Israel to repentance.<sup>2</sup> God sent John the Baptist to Israel to plead with them to forsake their evil past and put away their hard hearts so that they might recognize and receive Messiah. John's baptism was regarded as an expression of denouncing the hardness of heart that belonged to Israel! John the Baptist proclaimed, **"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."**<sup>3</sup>

So, Jesus was saying, "Nicodemus, you must be born of water. You, Nicodemus, a respected leader of Israel, need to start over. You need a new heart, a new life. You, Nicodemus, need to repent of your spiritual pride and religious self-exaltation. You, Nicodemus, need to live a humble life, born and led of the Spirit, for He will guide you into more truth and light. You, Nicodemus, can mark this new beginning by being born of water!"

### **What I Must Do to Be Saved**

**So, the answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" begins with a simple and inclusive sentence. Start right now. Give yourself completely to Jesus. This means to be, to do, and to go as He directs in your life. Humbly live up to what you know to be true and seek more truth. If you are willing to do what God asks you, willing to be what God asks you, and willing to go where God sends you—then you're living by faith and God grants you salvation full and free when you are willing to live by faith!**

The biblical definition of faith means full surrender. Remember Noah? He did all that God asked him to do. Remember Abraham? He went where God asked him to go. Remember Moses? He became what God wanted him to become. These worthy characters yielded their hearts to the will of

1 John 3:23

2 John 1:33

3 Matthew 3:11

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God and freely received His righteousness! If you allow Jesus to be the Lord of your life, you will want to obey Him. Jesus told His disciples, **“You are my friends if you do what I command.”**<sup>1</sup> **“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”**<sup>2</sup>

### Israel’s Role in God’s Plan

Now that we have considered salvation from the personal view, we must look at the corporate or global view of how God implements the Plan of Salvation.

God’s purpose in choosing the descendants of Abraham as a special people was not to make them the exclusive recipients of His love and special blessings. Rather, He chose them to be ambassadors of His love. **“I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”**<sup>3</sup> Israel was to be a channel through which the world would come to know and love the God of heaven, the Creator of all the universe. However, Satan thwarted that glorious plan by leading the Jews into total rebellion against their Creator.

For almost 850 years after Israel was delivered from the bondage of Egypt, Jesus worked with Israel to make them the great nation He wanted them to be. Each time Israel reached a plateau of physical comfort and wealth, they promptly forgot God and turned to idolatry. The reason idolatry was so attractive is that pagan religious services were more enticing than the worship of Jesus.

### True vs False Worship

The worship of Jesus is thoughtful and reflective. It causes us to search our sinful souls and brings us to a greater or daily realization of our need for a Savior. True worship unmask our deceitful hearts. For example, worshipping Jesus is like going to the dentist for a checkup, thinking that everything is OK, and discovering there are hidden cavities. When we genuinely worship Jesus, the Holy Spirit penetrates our souls and reveals hidden thoughts and impure motives. Obviously, this type of worship is contrary to human nature, and thus, Israel chose to worship other, exciting gods.

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1 John 15:14

2 John 14:21

3 Isaiah 49:6

Pagan worship comes in a thousand forms and ranges from the sublime to the ridiculous. Satan has devised a counterfeit worship for every type of lust. Some forms of false worship appear very close to true worship while other forms are excuses for the most degrading acts. Given the diverse range of false worship, the only general statement that can be made about false worship is that it neither glorifies our Creator nor brings the worshiper into harmony with His truth. There is a psychological phenomenon that says, “By beholding, we become changed.” This means that we become like the object of our worship. In time, false worship leads men and women to behave like the creator of sin while true worship leads men and women to become like their holy creator!

False worship appeals to the carnal or fallen nature. Those who worship in darkness hate truth because their deeds are exposed by the light! Jesus told His disciples, **“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”**<sup>1</sup> In Israel’s day, pagan worship included entertainment of all kinds. History tells us that everything from infant sacrifice to gross sexual practices was performed on or for the benefit of worshipers. Worship in many ways became a spectator’s delight. The attraction to such drama is that people can live out certain fantasies without participating in the act.

Today, videos, radio, magazines, the internet, and novels fulfill many of the sensual desires that pagan worship services provided for ancient Israel. Many of the Israelites would not actually commit the indecent acts they witnessed, but nonetheless, they enjoyed watching them. How does this compare with the multitude of evil acts presented in the media? Are we becoming a nobler and God-like nation because of our reading and entertainment?

### **God’s Wrath on Israel**

By 605 BC, the Jews had become so resistant to God’s plan and so degenerate in behavior that something drastic had to be done to get their attention. Therefore, God planned to destroy Israel. He would not destroy all Israel, He

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1 John 15:18–20

would save a remnant. With this remnant, He would start over and try one last time to achieve His objective. So, Jesus sent the Babylonian monarch, King Nebuchadnezzar, to destroy Jerusalem. After three sieges, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and carried off a remnant of Israel into captivity. Jesus did not destroy Jerusalem without warning. He sent many prophets to Israel so the nation would know what He was going to do and why. Israel rejected their warning messages and killed or destroyed most of them.

Jeremiah was one such prophet. Jesus speaking through Jeremiah said, **“‘People of Israel,’ declares the Lord, ‘I am bringing a distant nation against you—an ancient and enduring nation, a people whose language you do not know, whose speech you do not understand. Their quivers are like an open grave; all of them are mighty warriors. They will devour your harvests and food, devour your sons and daughters; they will devour your flocks and herds, devour your vines and fig trees. With the sword they will destroy the fortified cities in which you trust. Yet even in those days,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will not destroy you completely. And when the people ask, “Why has the Lord our God done all this to us?” you will tell them, “As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your own land, so now you will serve foreigners in a land not your own.”’<sup>1</sup> “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Listen! I am going to bring on this city and all the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words.’”<sup>2</sup> “I will give all Judah into the hands of the king of Babylon, who will carry them away to Babylon or put them to the sword.”<sup>3</sup>**

One of the remnant whom Nebuchadnezzar took into captivity was a young man named Daniel. This young man, unlike most young men of his time, loved the Lord with all his heart. The story of his life is quite remarkable for God used this humble young man to reach the proud heart of King Nebuchadnezzar, emperor of the world.

Jesus revealed to Daniel a great prophetic outline describing the future of Israel and the rest of the world. The visions Daniel recorded provide a wealth of information about the timing of the Plan of Salvation and tell us

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1 Jeremiah 5:15–19

2 Jeremiah 19:15

3 Jeremiah 20:4

how God works. Let's investigate one of the apocalyptic visions of Daniel and see how close we are to that glorious day.

### **Daniel Chapter 2 Opens the Future**

Stop! If you are not acquainted with Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2, read the story before continuing with this study. Four important issues are presented in this chapter.

1. First, we read about God's omniscience. Omniscience means having all knowledge. Daniel wrote, **"There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come."**<sup>1</sup> After explaining the vision, Daniel said, **"The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."**<sup>2</sup>
2. Jesus revealed to the great monarch of Babylon that astrologers, magicians, enchanters, and soothsayers are not connected to God and cannot predict the future. Their works (then and now) are essentially a collection of clever lies.<sup>3</sup>
3. Daniel 2 reveals Jesus' omnipotence. Omnipotence means having all power. Daniel said, **"Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him."**<sup>4</sup> In a later vision, Daniel again reminded the king, **"The Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes."**<sup>5</sup>
4. The vision and interpretation given to King Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel contain a broad apocalyptic outline of the future. Apocalyptic prophecy refers to prophecy that deals with a structured or sequential series of events. Jesus revealed to King Nebuchadnezzar that subsequent kingdoms would rise and fall until the time came for the God of heaven to establish His kingdom on earth.

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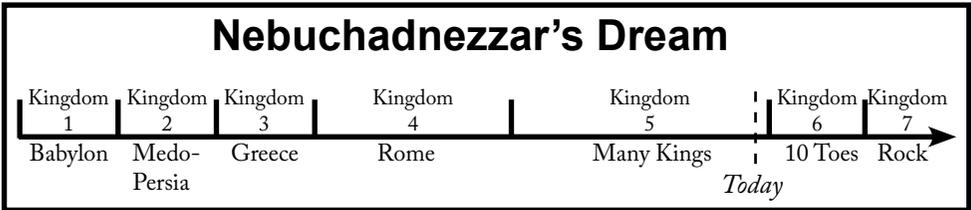
1 Daniel 2:28

2 Daniel 2:45

3 Daniel 2:8–11

4 Daniel 2:20–22

5 Daniel 4:25



Jesus represented the kingdoms of man to the king using the symbol of an image made of different metals. Babylon was represented by the head of gold and kingdoms that followed were represented by metals of lesser value.

Daniel explained to Nebuchadnezzar that another kingdom would succeed Babylon. This kingdom was represented by the chest and arms of silver. Afterwards, another kingdom would arise represented by the thighs of brass. The fourth kingdom was represented by the legs of iron. The fifth kingdom was represented by the feet of iron and clay, and the last kingdom of earth was represented by 10 toes, which represents a brief reign of 10 kings (a global confederation) just before Jesus will appear.

King Nebuchadnezzar was told that during the reign of these 10 kings that, **“In the time of those kings [the last 10 kings], the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.”**<sup>1</sup>

So, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is a broad explanation of the destiny of mankind beginning with his day. Integrating prophecy with history, we discover the following progression of world empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, many kings, 10 last kings, and finally, the kingdom of God. History and prophecy harmoniously combine so that we might understand God’s plans!

Just as Jesus predicted (remember, He is omniscient), the first four kingdoms have come and gone. As you can see from the diagram above, we are about to enter the period of the ten toes. Soon, we will see a brief confederation of 10 kings, and we will then know that Jesus’ return is at the door!

It is important that we recognize two elements of the vision.

- a. When Jesus, the *Rock of Ages* sets up His kingdom, He destroys all kingdoms of man. Daniel told the king, **“A rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay**

<sup>1</sup> Daniel 2:44

**and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.”**<sup>1</sup> In other words, the kingdom of Jesus will not coexist with the sinful kingdoms of man. Jesus will not reign on a sinful earth. Jesus will reign on earth after sin has been destroyed.

- b. 2500 years ago, Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar, **“The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy.”**<sup>2</sup> Today, we see the truthfulness of the dream. Remember, prophecy is history written in advance and history is prophecy fulfilled in the past. From the dream Jesus gave to Nebuchadnezzar, we must be very close to the end of the kingdoms of man.

### **Salvation and Prophecy Work Together**

We have studied the Plan of Salvation and its two components. First, the penalty of sin was paid in full by the death of Jesus on Calvary (Justification). Second, our Creator wants to restore His image in those who choose salvation (Sanctification). Prophecy is to the Plan of Salvation what wedding plans are to a couple planning for marriage. The Bible often compares the second coming of Jesus to a marriage feast or a wedding. **“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come.”**<sup>3</sup> Those who have received salvation are anticipating Jesus’ return and consequently, are interested in prophecy! What would you say about a couple who are indifferent about the date of their wedding? What would you say of Christians who are indifferent about the time of Christ’s coming?

Many people are confused about the fullness of salvation. If it’s so simple, why is it so hard to understand? In summary, the plan is simple, but not shallow. It is wonderful, but intricate. The Plan of Salvation is a deep and fascinating subject and those who love God find great joy in learning about His plans to return man to Eden. In the next chapter, we will investigate some of the sobering issues that stand behind the scenes of Calvary.

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1 Daniel 2:34–35

2 Daniel 2:45

3 Revelation 19:7



# The Ministry of Jesus

Jesus told Moses, **“Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.”**<sup>1</sup>

Moses built a sanctuary in the wilderness according to the blueprints God gave him, carefully following each detail. The sanctuary complex constructed in the wilderness consisted of the following items.<sup>2</sup> Identify each item listed below in the diagram on the next page.

- a. Courtyard
- b. Tabernacle with two rooms: Holy Place / Most Holy Place
- c. Altar of Burnt Offering
- d. Basin
- e. Altar of Incense
- f. Table of the Presence
- g. Lampstand
- h. Ark of the Covenant

The sanctuary was built in a way it could be disassembled and carried from place to place. Jewish history reveals that every piece of metal, cloth, wood, and stone used in the construction of the sanctuary had an inscribed name—the name of the person responsible for carrying it. When the bearer died, the next of kin became responsible. Thus, the responsibility of carrying the sanctuary was passed down through generations until the sanctuary was given a permanent resting place.

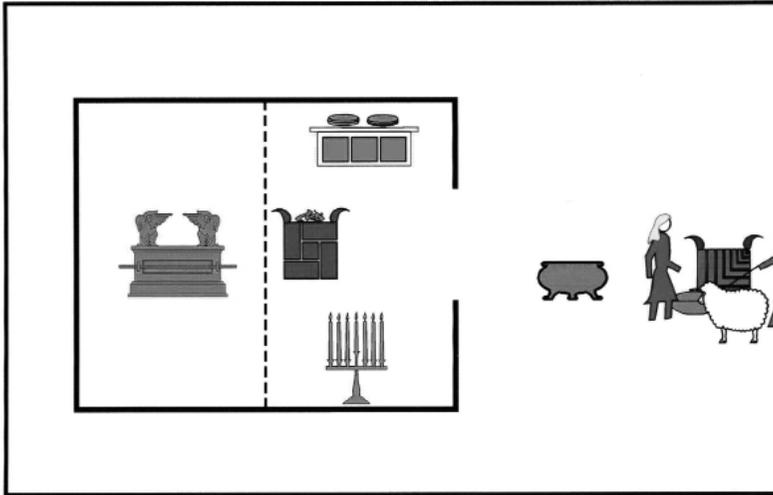
The sanctuary service is a vital study. The significance of how and why each event took place is as broad and comprehensive as God. Most Christians

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1 Exodus 25:8–9

2 Exodus 25–40

## Sin Offering



do not understand the value or meaning of the sanctuary service because the New Testament is clear that the religious *services* conducted in the earthly sanctuary became obsolete when Jesus died. However, many Christians are surprised to learn that the religious *meaning* of what occurred in the earthly sanctuary applies to soon-coming prophetic events.

Jesus gave the sanctuary service to the children of Israel as a model of the Plan of Salvation. They were to study the meaning of sanctuary events and understand the scope of the Plan of Salvation. They could carefully study the sanctuary service to comprehend God's love and compassion. Through this study, they were to be drawn into a deep appreciation of God and what He offers to the human family. They were to discover God's love as they contemplated the price He would pay for salvation. And most of all, they were to share an understanding of God's love with the world. As recipients of God's blessings, they were to be the human agency through whom the knowledge of God would be spread to other nations.

### Fundamental Point About Israel

There is much confusion among Christians about God's relationship with ancient Israel. Some believe that the covenant God gave Abraham exclusively belongs to the Jews. While God did choose the people of Israel to accomplish His purpose, it is also important to understand that God did not exclude the rest of the people living on earth at that time. Rather, it

was God’s intention for Israel to demonstrate what He was like *to the rest of the world* and thus bring many to know and love the God of Abraham. In this way, the entire world would be blessed through Abraham’s descendants. Israel was to be God’s agent to share His blessings and truth—not the exclusive object of His affection.

### God’s Purpose for the Jews

Before Moses died, he reminded Israel of their calling.

**“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction; he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him. Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today.”<sup>1</sup>**

Unfortunately, the children of Israel never caught the vision of God’s plan for their nation. They failed to become a model nation. They were to represent the God of heaven in such a way that others would want to know their God, but Israel failed to grasp the concept. About 700 BC, the Lord revealed through Isaiah that Israel was so far away from His plan that He was going to destroy the nation and start over with a remnant. After His wrath passed, God promised that He would restore Israel and said, **“I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”<sup>2</sup>**

Seven hundred years later, Jesus himself emphasized the intended purpose for the Jews saying, **“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for**

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1 Deuteronomy 7:6–11

2 Isaiah 49:6

anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.”<sup>1</sup> “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”<sup>2</sup>

The Pharisees recognized the responsibility of winning converts to Judaism, but the reputation of the Jews among other nations became so bad, that no one wanted to join them! Jesus said to them, “**Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.**”<sup>3</sup>

If the Jews had not been so stiff-necked, they would have understood their glorious opportunity. They were the people through whom Messiah would come. In their self-centered nationalistic views, they vainly thought that the Messiah would come and elevate them above all other nations. They didn’t realize that their role was to exalt the Messiah above all false gods.

It is ironic that many Samaritans, half-breeds whom the Jews hated, understood the purpose of the promised Messiah. They told the woman at the well, “**We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.**”<sup>4</sup>

Jesus wanted Nicodemus to realize that His purpose was not to elevate Israel. His scope was much larger. Jesus said, “**For God so loved the *world* that he gave his one and only Son.**”<sup>5</sup> King David recognized the sovereignty of the Lord over the whole world. “**Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.**”<sup>6</sup>

### God Does Choose People

God’s offer of salvation to man has never changed. From Adam and Eve to this very day, salvation has *always* come by faith in God. The problem

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1 Matthew 5:13–14

2 Matthew 5:16

3 Matthew 23:15

4 John 4:42

5 John 3:16

6 Psalm 33:8–9

with salvation is that faith is often misunderstood. Faith is much more than intellectual assent or agreement with truth. The Bible's definition of faith is complete surrender to the will of God.<sup>1</sup> This is where ancient Israel failed, and it is where most of us fail.

We must review a little Bible history so we can understand why God selected Abraham and his descendants and gave them the rich treasures of His blessings:

1. About 400 years after the flood, while the population of earth was relatively small, God looked down on the earth and found a descendant of Noah who was a good man. God introduced himself to Abram, and eventually, He called Abram out of heathenism and chose him to be the person through whom all people on earth would be blessed. God said to Abram, **“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you.”**<sup>2</sup> **“I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”**<sup>3</sup>
2. One night God asked Abram to count the stars—if he could. **“Then he [God] said to him [Abram], ‘So shall your offspring be.’ Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”**<sup>4</sup> It is important to realize that both Noah and Abram were declared *righteous* because they believed what God said. Notice what Paul said about these two men, **“By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith. By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.”**<sup>5</sup> **“And so from this one man . . . came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.”**<sup>6</sup>
3. So, about 650 years after Jesus called Abraham, He called Moses, who was a descendent of Abraham, to deliver His people from Egypt. **“By**

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1 Matthew 7:21

2 Genesis 12:2

3 Genesis 12:3

4 Genesis 15:5–6

5 Hebrews 11:7–8

6 Hebrews 11:12

faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward."<sup>1</sup>

4. As Israel was about to enter the Promised Land, Moses summoned the Israelites and told them, **"The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out [of Egypt] with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments."**<sup>2</sup>

Moses made it clear that Israel was not going to receive the land of Canaan from the nations occupying the territory because of their 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, the Lord your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people."**<sup>3</sup>

When Jesus delivered Israel out of Egypt, He took them to an isolated place to teach them His ways. There were no enemies in the Sinai Desert to torment Israel during their early days as a nation for that barren desert could not support life. Jesus miraculously sent water gushing from a rock and dropped manna from heaven for 40 years. Their clothing did not wear out; neither did their shoes.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Hebrews 11:24–26

2 Deuteronomy 7:7–9

3 Deuteronomy 9:4–6

4 Deuteronomy 29:5

Because Jesus wanted to be close to these people and teach them His ways of truth and righteousness, He commanded Moses, **“Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.”**<sup>1</sup> Consider the condescension of Jesus. He took this uneducated group of *stiff-necked* slaves and attempted to transform them into a great nation as a noble and beautiful example of His re-creative power. There was one condition though. Moses told them, **“If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.”**<sup>2</sup> **“However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.”**<sup>3</sup>

### Timeout for a Thought Question

Do you think God promised Abraham a great number of biological descendants or was God promising to make Abraham the spiritual forefather of millions who would live by faith just as he lived by faith?

A spiritual relative is someone who walks the same way as Abraham or Noah lived, that is, by faith. Jesus said to the Jews, **“If you were Abraham’s children . . . then you would do what Abraham did.”**<sup>4</sup> Christians often use the term *brother* or *sister* to denote kinship in a spiritual sense. Jesus defines who His brothers and sisters and mother are: **“While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.’**

**“He replied to him, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.’”**<sup>5</sup>

Before answering the question of whether Abraham’s offspring were literal or spiritual descendants, consider this added question: Can the faith

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1 Exodus 25:8–9

2 Deuteronomy 28:1

3 Deuteronomy 28:15

4 John 8:39

5 Matthew 12:46–50

and righteousness of an ancestor save a descendent from eternal death? Can the evil deeds of an ancestor condemn a descendant to eternal death? The answer in both cases is no.<sup>1</sup> The Bible is clear. *Your* eternal destiny comes from *your* choices. Jesus said, “**Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.**”<sup>2</sup> So, what spiritual advantage came with being a Jew?

Abram and Sarai, his wife, thought the promise of God referred to biological offspring. To solve their childless problem, Sarai suggested that Abram sleep with Hagar, her maidservant, and thus they could begin a family. Abraham and Hagar bore Ishmael, who became the father of 12 tribes. It may come as a surprise to learn that Abraham **is** the biological father of a great multitude: the Arabs.<sup>3</sup> But the Arabs are not the great multitude of descendants that God promised. And neither are the Jews the great multitude of descendants promised to Abraham. Today, the Jewish population numbers 1/30<sup>th</sup> of the Arab population, comparatively not a great multitude.

The great multitude that God promised to Abraham will be the redeemed of earth! This number will be in the billions so the great multitude promised to Abraham are those who would walk with God just as Abraham did. This is why Jesus identified His brothers and sisters as those who do the will of God.<sup>4</sup>

Apostle Paul tried to convince the Jews that being a descendant of Abraham was beneficial. After all, God had specifically favored Israel—BUT, Paul insisted, “**A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.**”<sup>5</sup>

### End of Timeout – Legalism is Not the Answer

Moses did not imply that a legalistic relationship with God would bring greatness or fulfill His purposes. Legalism is a term that means legal process which is, by nature, nitpicking and technical. Moses was afraid that

1 Ezekiel 14:12–23

2 Revelation 22:12

3 For further study read Genesis 16–21, 25:7–18.

4 Matthew 12:46–50

5 Romans 2:28–29

Israel would reduce God to a collection of rules, and he wanted Israel to see that their potential to be a great nation could *not* be fulfilled by merely doing what God said. Unless God’s people kept the spirit of God’s Law in their hearts, they would soon grow weary of obeying them. So, Moses said, **“Love the Lord your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always.”**<sup>1</sup> **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.”**<sup>2</sup> **“Because he loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength.”**<sup>3</sup> **“Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.”**<sup>4</sup> If you had observed Jesus miraculously delivering Israel from slavery—if you had watched the Children of Israel walk through the Red Sea and eat manna for 40 years—if you saw the water gush from a rock and the powerful manifestations of Jesus at Mt. Sinai—if you saw how Jesus provided His people a special place in the Promised Land—wouldn’t you love the Lord your God?

### Think it Through

Consider for a moment that Jesus, the creator of heaven and earth, the Holy One of Israel, Jehovah God, the great I AM, the Almighty, the God of Israel, is also the meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth. Many Christians are overwhelmed to learn that the one called “Jesus” in the New Testament is the *same* Jesus of the Old Testament! Most Old Testament references about God refer to our Creator instead of the Father! Jesus said to the Jewish scholars, **“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.”**<sup>5</sup> **If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.”**<sup>6</sup>

### Sanctuary Services

The role of Jesus in the Plan of Salvation is remarkably explained in the symbols and ceremonies of the Old Testament. Jesus designed that each

1 Deuteronomy 11:1

2 Deuteronomy 6:5–6

3 Deuteronomy 4:37

4 Deuteronomy 4:39

5 John 5:39

6 John 5:46

service teaches a special and specific lesson about the process of salvation that would be fulfilled during His first advent as well as His second advent. For this study, we will explore the meaning of three important services.

1. The morning and evening sacrifice
2. The sin offering
3. The Day of Atonement

### The Morning and Evening Sacrifice

The morning and evening sacrifices were conducted at sunrise and sunset each day. A flawless year-old male lamb was sacrificed on the Altar of Burnt Offering. The priest conducting the service carried some of the lamb's blood into the first room of the sanctuary (the holy place) and sprinkled it on the Altar of Incense. The service also consisted of burning special incense on coals of the altar.

This sacrifice and its related services became known as the *daily* or *continual* for they occurred each morning and evening. A short story will help you understand what the daily service represents.

Before sin began, God told Adam<sup>1</sup> that if he or Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would be executed the moment they ate from the tree. The only reason they weren't immediately executed is because Jesus stepped between the wrath of God and the guilty pair.

God gave Adam a warning and note the terms of punishment: **“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”**<sup>2</sup> A quick comparison of this verse with the Amplified Bible, the New American Standard and the New Revised Standard reveals that an immediate execution of the sentence was to be carried out. The NIV clearly puts the matter in immediate language saying, **“when you eat from it you will certainly die.”**

Adam and Eve knew the death penalty for disobedience. They knew about the Devil and his intentions to harm them. They also knew they would be safe as long as they obeyed God's command. They also knew that if they disobeyed, He who had not spared the angels, would not spare them. The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil represented immediate death to them.

1 Genesis 2:17

2 Genesis 2:17, KJV

Then one day, Eve saw a beautiful serpent eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. Perhaps one of the greatest inducements to Eve's temptation and fall was the fact that the serpent did not immediately die after eating the fruit. Her amazement with this conflicting evidence was only second to the fact that the serpent could now speak after eating the fruit! Eve was caught by complete surprise on both counts. These two surprises left her with no rational defense. In this frame of mind, she began a deadly discussion with the serpent.

Eve was no match for the Devil's sophistry and cunning. He had an agenda, she had curiosity. He carefully questioned her knowledge of God's command so that he could entrap her with her own words. It didn't take long. Eve's innocent words to the serpent tell us that she associated the tree with sudden death. She responded to the serpent's inquiry saying, "**God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'**"<sup>1</sup> Actually, God did not say they could not touch it. He said they could not *eat* from it. So, Eve associated immediate death even with the touching of the tree.

### **Eve Could Not Deny the Evidence**

How could Eve argue the surety of God's Word, since the serpent had eaten the fruit and had not immediately died? There he was, smacking his lips and enjoying another piece of fruit. Even more, the serpent now had the power of speech because of eating the forbidden fruit! The undeniable evidence before her led Eve to question what God had said. Eve lost faith in God's Word. If we add to her moment of confusion the satanic fantasy of being like God, we can easily see how temptation overcame her. The Devil led Eve to fantasize that she could possess new powers by simply eating the beautiful fruit. He may have used an argument like this, "If this fruit gave me, a mere serpent of the field the power of speech, what would it do for you, Eve?" In this strange and confusing state of mind, Eve took the offered fruit and ate it.

Heaven saw the drama and, according to God's Law, at that very moment, Eve was to be executed. That was the divine decree, but Jesus stepped between God's justifiable wrath and guilty Eve. Her execution was stayed—the sentence of death would be imposed, but through other means.

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1 Genesis 3:3

Back on earth, Eve gathered some fruit and ran to Adam. Now Eve became Satan's vehicle of temptation. When Adam saw the fruit, he knew what had happened. As he listened to Eve, he immediately sized up the situation. For the first time in his life, complete sadness filled his soul. He was not under the beguiling influence of a talking snake, yet he faced a great temptation. He knew that separation from Eve was inevitable. He was puzzled by the fact that Eve was not dead, for he knew the words of his Creator. Adam knew that sudden death had been promised, yet Eve was standing right in front of him.

He contemplated his wife's predicament for some time and then he made a terrible decision. He would rather share her fate, whatever it might be, than live without her. Humanly speaking, we might admire Adam's great love for his wife, except that God asks that we love and obey Him first—even before family.<sup>1</sup>

Adam willfully violated God's command because he wanted to be with Eve more than he wanted to obey God. He saw no solution to her dilemma. He did not trust God to save his wife even though her physical presence before him was proof that God had stayed her execution. So, he took the fruit and, in the fullest sense, he bit off more than he and all his descendants would be able to chew. At that very moment, Jesus again stepped between the wrath of God and guilty Adam. Adam's execution was stayed. Yes, he would also die, but not immediately.

### **The Plan Made for Man**

God foreknew that Adam and Eve would sin and that's why the Plan of Salvation was in place before the world was created. Even though they knew better, their sin was not in open defiance of God and this is why He stayed their execution. This is why salvation was offered to man. The Plan of Salvation does not lessen the penalty of sin. The penalty remains and God will impose eternal death at the end of the millennium. It is called the second death. The Plan of Salvation does not alter a consequence of sin—sleep, or the first death. What the Plan of Salvation offers is pardon from the penalty of sin, not the consequences of sin. Only Jesus can mediate and pardon us from the penalty of sin.

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1 Matthew 22:37; 10:35–38

### Our Need for a Mediator

Mediation is the action of *stepping between* God's wrath and man. Ever since that awful day, Jesus has been mediating on behalf of humanity. Paul says, **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."**<sup>1</sup> Because Adam and Eve came under the condemnation of eternal death, all their offspring are born under the same condemnation. Children born to slaves are also slaves.

Adam's sin was more serious than Eve's sin for two reasons. First, Adam intentionally chose to disobey. The issues were not misrepresented, nor did he act out of sheer impulse. Second, Adam was the trustee of the law. Genesis 2:17 says that God commanded *the man* not to eat of the tree. In other words, Adam was held responsible for sin, for he was put in charge, and he willfully disobeyed God's direct order! Remember, the consequences of sin, whether accidental or willful, are always the same.

Because Adam willfully sinned, his descendants would be sinners. Paul wrote, **"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned."**<sup>2</sup> Because all human beings are under the same curse of sin, all human beings need a mediator if they want to escape the penalty of sin. For this reason, Jesus currently stands between (intercedes) the wrath of God and guilty man. Paul recognized this ministry of Jesus in heaven saying, **"Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."**<sup>3</sup>

This point is most important. The *daily* (also called the *continual*) was designed to teach Israel that only the *daily* intercession of Jesus, the Lamb of God, permitted man to live without being destroyed!<sup>4</sup> The *daily* provided **corporate** atonement on behalf of the whole nation of Israel and was not directed toward any one individual.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the daily in ancient Israel symbolized the daily ministry of Jesus which began the day Adam and Eve sinned and continues for the world to this very day.

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1 1 Timothy 2:5

2 Romans 5:12

3 Hebrews 7:25

4 Exodus 29:38–46; 30:7–8

5 Leviticus 4

### The Sin Offering

From time to time, leaders or priests made offerings for specific sins. The sin offering was conducted through a sacrifice on the Altar of Burnt Offering where the organs were ultimately consumed by the fire of the altar. The sinner placed his hands upon the head of his offering and confessed his sin, or if representing his family, the sins of his family. With his own hand, the sinner then took the life of the sacrificial lamb. The priest put some of the blood of the sacrifice on the horns of the altar and then poured the blood from this offering into a container at the base of the altar. The sinner then carried the offal away from the service and disposed it.

This sacrifice was designed to teach the Hebrews two lessons. First, remission for personal sins could only come through shed blood. The death of the lamb pointed forward to the death of Jesus—as a personal sacrifice for those who wanted His salvation. Second, God wanted Israel to understand that He had a way of transferring sin away from the sinner.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of this offering cannot be overstated. This offering brought sin and sinner together and then it separated the sin from the sinner. Jesus wanted each person to understand that the sinner had to confess his sin on the head of the lamb before the sin could be atoned for. In this setting, Jesus wanted each person to know that he could be forgiven.

Neither the daily nor the sin offering in ancient Israel had efficacy. *This means that the offerings did not actually bring atonement. Rather, these offerings only demonstrated how atonement would be made.* Paul clearly says, **“It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”**<sup>2</sup>

### Two Important Contrasts

There are two important differences between the daily sacrifice and the sin offering. First, the daily sacrifice referred to something *that had been done* while the sin offering pointed to something that would be done. In other words, the daily pointed to the fact that Jesus had already stepped between the wrath of God and guilty man. He did this the day Adam and Eve sinned. On the other hand, the sin offering pointed to the fact that Jesus would die *at an appointed time* for the sins of the world. Paul says, **“But**

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1 Leviticus 6:24–30

2 Hebrews 10:4

**when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.”<sup>1</sup>**

The second contrast between these two offerings centers on their application. The daily was a corporate offering. It was offered for the camp of Israel as a group while the sin offering was presented by a person or a family. Through these two offerings, the sins of Israel were transferred away from the sinner. Corporately, the sins of Israel were transferred into the sanctuary. Individually, the sins of people were transferred onto the horns of the Altar of Burnt Offering. Then, at the end of the religious year, on the Day of Atonement, the blood that had been deposited on the altars of the sanctuary was removed. Thus, the sanctuary was cleansed of defilement, and the record of sin was removed.

### **The Day of Atonement**

The tenth day of the seventh month was a yearly judgment day called the Day of Atonement. The word *atonement* means reconciliation, a bringing together or at-one-ment. This day was a special sabbath that always fell on the tenth day of the seventh month. No work was done on the Day of Atonement regardless of the day of the week it fell.<sup>2</sup> All Israel was required to come before God in person on this day to account for their deeds during the past year. Only the high priest officiated in the temple services on the Day of Atonement.

Other priests who normally served in the temple throughout the year could not represent Israel before God on this day. Before the high priest could officiate, he had to go through a qualifying process in the most holy compartment of the sanctuary. *He had to be found worthy of conducting this work before he could officiate on behalf of Israel!* The qualification process for the high priest is intimately connected to an impressive scene in Revelation 4 & 5.

Even though God chose the high priest to serve in His sanctuary, the high priest had to be found acceptable or worthy to serve on this annual occasion. The process began on the morning of the Day of Atonement. First, the high priest offered a very expensive sacrifice. He killed a bull and presented the blood before God in the most holy portion of the sanctuary. With trembling and reverence, the high priest entered the second room of

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1 Galatians 4:4

2 Leviticus 16:29

the sanctuary to stand in God's presence. In the brilliance of Shekinah glory, the priest's life and behavior were reviewed and God pronounced approval or rejection of the suitability of the high priest to officiate on behalf of his people. This preparatory service on the Day of Atonement symbolized a service that would occur in heaven's sanctuary when the judgment of human beings begins. We will consider the importance of this preparatory service when we study the seven seals.<sup>1</sup>

After God deemed the high priest worthy, the service on the Day of Atonement focused on the cleansing (reconsecration–NIV) of the sanctuary, that is, the restoration of the sanctuary to a sinless condition. All year long, the sins of the people had been transferred to the sanctuary through the blood of the sacrifices and offerings. On this very special day, the high priest performed the service to restore the sanctuary to its sinless condition. The high priest symbolically did this by removing the blood from the horns of both altars. After cleansing the horns of the altars, the high priest then wiped his bloody hands on the head of the scapegoat. Thus, the sins of the sanctuary were transferred from the sanctuary to the scapegoat.

### **Notice the Relationship**

The daily, the sin offering, and the Day of Atonement demonstrate the basic building blocks within the Plan of Salvation. The daily demonstrates unmerited justification (the gift of God), the sin offering demonstrates sanctification (the response of man), and the Day of Atonement demonstrates the final judgment and disposition of sin (the judgment).

### **The Penalty and the Consequence**

In the economy of salvation, there is a distinct difference between penalties and consequences. Sin contains both properties. Here are two simple (but horrifying) examples: First, if a man rapes a woman and if the rapist is brought to justice, he will receive a penalty for his deed. However, the consequence of his deed will remain with the woman for the rest of her life. In this case, one person receives the penalty and the other receives the consequence. Second, suppose a drunken driver has an accident causing the driver to lose his leg. When justice is served, the driver is not only assessed a penalty for driving while intoxicated, but he must also spend the rest of

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1 Leviticus 16:17; Hebrews 7:27; 9:7

his life without the leg. In this case, the driver receives both a penalty and a consequence. Sin has both a penalty and a consequence. The penalty for sin is eternal death. The consequences of sin can vary from momentary suffering to a lifetime of remorse.

The sanctuary service addresses both elements of sin. After the high priest received God's approval to serve on behalf of Israel, he went into the courtyard to select one of two goats as sacrifices for the sins of Israel. He chose one goat to pay the penalty for sin, the other was left to bear the consequence of sin. The sacrificial goat paid the penalty for sin as a sin offering<sup>1</sup> and the other goat received the consequence of sin. This goat, sometimes called the scapegoat, was taken into the wilderness to die after the sins of the sanctuary were placed on his head.<sup>2</sup>

There is an important difference between paying the penalty for sin and reaping the consequences of sin. These two goats symbolize two distinct processes for death. The first goat pointed forward to the death of Jesus. Jesus paid the penalty for the sins of those who will receive Him as Savior. The second goat symbolizes the death of Satan. As the father of sin, not only will Satan receive the penalty and consequence for his own sins, but he must suffer the consequences of all the sins committed by the redeemed. These will be added to his account, and he will suffer proportionately. God requires complete atonement for sins.

The sanctuary process reveals a valuable lesson. Each wicked person will receive the penalty and reap the consequences for their own sins at the end of the millennium. The penalty will be ultimate death. The consequences will be experienced during the time spent in suffering. However, the redeemed will escape the penalty of their sins because Jesus, the source of salvation, paid the penalty. However, Satan, the source of sin, will receive the consequence of the sins of the redeemed.

### **The Atonement Service**

After the high priest was found worthy to officiate, he removed the beautiful and lavish garments of his office. In plain white linen, he sacrificed the first goat and then entered the Most Holy Place a second time. The change in clothing symbolizes the work of Jesus on earth for man. To

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1 Leviticus 16:9

2 Leviticus 16:22

make atonement for man, Jesus laid aside His beautiful clothing in heaven and He came to earth and served before God in the humble garb of man.

When God accepted the atonement presented on behalf of Israel, the high priest left the Most Holy Place. Next, the high priest washed and removed the accumulated blood on the horns of the Altar of Incense that stood before the veil in the first compartment (Holy Place). The priest then walked out into the courtyard and cleansed the horns on the Altar of Burnt Offering. Then, he proceeded to the other goat and wiped his bloody hands on its head. This animal was called “Azazel,” which is translated as the scapegoat in some versions of the Bible. Afterward, a capable man took this scapegoat far into the desert to die. It died a slow, agonizing death because the consequences of sin are agonizing to the victims of sin. Ask a woman who has been raped. Ask a child who was sexually molested. Ask a mother whose son was murdered.

Notice the three-step process. The penalty for sin was paid by a sacrificial offering. The sanctuary was cleansed of blood and restored to a *sinless* condition. Last, all record of sin (the blood on the horns) was placed upon the head of the second goat. When the goat was removed, the high priest joyfully announced that the camp was clean of sin.

### **Old Testament Sanctuary Services Still Apply**

The morning and evening sacrifices, the sin offering, and the Day of Atonement teach a great deal about the book of Revelation for it centers around heaven’s sanctuary! Paul stated that Jesus is directly involved in the heavenly sanctuary services. **“We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.”**<sup>1</sup> **“They [people] serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: ‘See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’”**<sup>2</sup>

The sanctuary services in the Old Testament are a shadow or outline of real events occurring in heaven. The sanctuary services explain the process

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1 Hebrews 8:1–2

2 Hebrews 8:5

Jesus uses to save man. God built the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus, the High Priest of humanity, serves, while Moses built an earthly sanctuary, which was only a teaching model based on the true process in heaven. What is Jesus doing up there? How does the Old Testament sanctuary system relate to the end of the world and the great judgment of earth's people?

Many Christians miss the entire point of the earthly sanctuary just like the ancient Jews did. The Jews believed the sacrificial services brought salvation when in reality, they never made salvation possible! Paul stated, **“But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”**<sup>1</sup> God told Isaiah, **“The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?’ says the Lord. ‘I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.’”**<sup>2</sup> The sacrificial services were never intended as a means to heaven, rather they were examples of what Jesus is doing for man and why!

### **Animal Sacrifices—A Teaching Model**

The sacrifice of animals in the Old Testament never led to salvation because it was only a teaching model. God gave the Jews this model so they and their descendants could understand the price and process of salvation. The Jews turned the model into a perversion—thinking, like the pagans, that salvation came through religious acts rather than a broken and contrite heart.

When Jesus died on Calvary, the earthly model was finished. Reality had come. Therefore, the sacrifices of animals became null and void. The price for sin had been paid once for all; but the *meaning* of the model continues. Ultimately, the service represented by the Day of Atonement is yet to conclude in heaven.

God chose a lamb to symbolize Christ, but the blood of a million lambs cannot bring salvation. Sanctuary services could not bring salvation to those who observed them, for salvation only comes through faith.<sup>3</sup> Old Testament sanctuary services are still important because they prefigure reality; the shadow helps us understand reality.

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1 Hebrews 10:3–4

2 Isaiah 1:11

3 Hebrews 11

Thirty times in Revelation, Jesus is called the *Lamb*, and once, Jesus is called the lion.<sup>1</sup> To those who receive Him, Jesus is a sacrificial lamb. He is gentle and loving. To those who reject Him, Jesus will someday appear as an angry lion, devouring all who have rebelled against Him.<sup>2</sup> The revelation of all that Jesus is, is something the world will soon experience.

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1 Revelation 5:5

2 Revelation 19:11–15



# Identifying the Time of the End

Those who study prophecy study the deep things of God attempting to understand God's purposes and works. Unfortunately, most people have a very narrow and limited view of the Plan of Salvation. This is confirmed when we hear, "Prophecy has little to do with salvation, so why bother with it?" Actually, prophecy has everything to do with salvation. If the doctrine of salvation reveals God's justice and mercy, then prophecy reveals God's plans to accomplish salvation. Can you imagine a young couple engaged to be married without discussing a date for marriage? Can you imagine a church praising God for His great salvation *and* being unconcerned about the consummation of salvation? Is it possible for God's people to be anxiously waiting for the Bridegroom *but* indifferent about the timing and events that preface His return?

### Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

We investigated King Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Chapter 4. God showed the king succeeding kingdoms of man outlined in the image of a man, made from various metals. I want to review a few comments I made in Chapter 4 because they are so sweeping in their meaning:

1. First, Daniel declared two statements to the king about God's omniscience. Daniel said, "**There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come.**"<sup>1</sup> And after explaining the vision, Daniel said, "**The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.**"<sup>2</sup>

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1 Daniel 2:28

2 Daniel 2:45

2. By giving this dream to the king, Jesus revealed to the great monarch of Babylon that astrologers, magicians, enchanters, and soothsayers are not connected to God, and they are unable to predict the future. Their works, then and today, are simply a collection of clever lies.<sup>1</sup>
3. Daniel revealed Jesus' omnipotence to the king. Omnipotence means having all power. Daniel said, **“Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.”**<sup>2</sup> In a later vision, Daniel again reminded the king of God's authority: **“The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.”**<sup>3</sup> **“The Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.”**<sup>4</sup>
4. King Nebuchadnezzar's vision and Daniel's interpretation contain a broad apocalyptic outline of the future describing a sequence of coming events. Remember, apocalyptic prophecy refers to prophecy that deals with a sequential series of events. Jesus revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that subsequent kingdoms would rise and fall until the time came for the God of heaven to set up His kingdom on earth.

The image made of different metals represented the kingdoms of man. Babylon was the head of gold and kingdoms that followed were represented by metals of lesser value. Daniel bluntly told King Nebuchadnezzar that another kingdom would succeed Babylon. This kingdom was represented by the chest and arms of silver. Afterward, another kingdom would arise represented by the thighs of brass. The fourth kingdom was represented by legs of iron. The fifth kingdom was represented by the feet of iron and clay; and the sixth kingdom of earth was represented by 10 toes which represent a brief reign of a global confederation of 10 kings just before Jesus appears.

1 Daniel 2:8–11

2 Daniel 2:20–22

3 Daniel 4:17

4 Daniel 4:25

**“As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.”<sup>1</sup>**

During the reign of these 10 kings, **“The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.”<sup>2</sup>**

So, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is a very broad explanation of mankind’s destiny beginning in his day. We can discover the following progression of five world empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the time of many kings by comparing Bible prophecy with history. We have yet to see the brief reign of the 10 last kings and the establishment of God’s kingdom. History and prophecy harmoniously combine so that we can understand His plans! Even more, a careful study of prophecy allows us to identify our time in God’s great chain of events.

### **Daniel has a Vision**

A few years after the king’s vision, Daniel had a vision that covered the same kingdoms and time periods as Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. In fact, as you study Daniel and Revelation, you will soon notice the prophetic process of repetition and enlargement. This process is indispensable in our search for truth because no one prophecy is complete. All 17 apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation combine to form a harmonious matrix and the operation of this matrix explains two things. First, we can locate the chronology of each prophetic element. Second, we can better understand one prophecy by adding those elements from other prophecies that occur at the same time. So, God gave the king a broad picture of future events and then God gave Daniel a view of the same events with more detail!

### **Daniel saw a Lion, Bear, Leopard, and a Terrible Beast**

Daniel’s vision is recorded in Daniel 7. Daniel’s dream consisted of four strange beasts. They were unusual because features were added to their bodies to highlight certain characteristics.

1. A lion with eagle wings
2. A bear with three ribs in its mouth

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1 Daniel 2:42

2 Daniel 2:44

3. A leopard with four wings and four heads
4. A terrible beast with 10 horns

These four beasts were four great kingdoms that would rise from the earth.<sup>1</sup> Given the limited number of kingdoms that would rise before the world would come to an end outlined in Daniel 2, we might wonder if these beasts paralleled the kingdoms revealed in Daniel 2. Most Bible historians agree that the four beasts represent the *first four kingdoms* in Nebuchadnezzar's vision. Remember, the Bible parallels prophetic sequences with other sequences to help us understand the meaning of a prophecy. So, as the lion is the king of beasts and gold is the king of metals, the kingdom of Babylon was represented to Daniel as a lion.

The bear with three ribs in its mouth represents the savage rise of the Medo-Persian Empire. The three ribs symbolized the skeletal remains of the last three provinces that impeded its rise to power: Egypt, Lydia, and Babylon. The leopard, swift and cunning, represented the rise of Grecia. The four heads represented the division of Greece after the death of its first king, Alexander the Great. The terrible beast represents the fourth kingdom that would rule over the world: Rome. The harmony of the chronological sequence and the historical confirmation of the contents of the visions conclusively identify the meaning of these symbols.

### **The Fourth Beast**

Even though Daniel observed four beasts in his vision, he was distressed and awed by the fourth beast, for it was very different from the other beasts. This beast specifically persecuted God's saints.<sup>2</sup> Here are the specifications concerning the fourth beast in Daniel 7 and the little horn that came up later:

1. It started out as the fourth world empire.
2. It was unusual in strength and furious with enemies.
3. It had teeth made of iron.
4. Out of this kingdom 10 horns, or kings, arise.
5. After the 10 kings appear, a little horn arises and uproots three of the original 10 kings.
6. This new horn has all the fierce qualities of its parent, the terrible fourth beast.

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1 Daniel 7:17

2 Daniel 7:21, 25

7. The little horn power becomes a great horn—much stronger than any of the remaining seven horns.
8. The little horn power blasphemes the God of heaven.
9. The little horn power wars against the saints for a specified time.
10. The little horn power *thinks* to change times and laws.
11. The little horn power endures until the end of the world.

Bible students have recognized Rome as the fourth beast for more than 1,500 years. Rome followed the empire of Grecia. For over 700 years, students of prophecy have identified the little horn power (items 5-11) as an antichrist power. There is no question concerning the character of the little horn. It is anti-God. We need to correctly identify this antichrist power because the time of the end will begin when the little horn power is broken. The little horn power will play a leading role just before Jesus comes.

The little horn power is the great spiritual power that came out of the fourth kingdom, that is, Rome. For more than 700 years, prophecy students have called the little horn power the universal Christian Church or the Roman Catholic Church.

A collection of writings calling for reform in the Roman Catholic Church began to circulate about AD 1300. As time passed, a significantly increased number of people called for change due to the open and defiant abuses of the Church. Those denouncing the teachings or doctrines of the Church became known as *protectors* or *protestants*. Their united plea was simple, “Get rid of the harsh and unjust rule of Roman clerics teaching manmade traditions. Give us the Bible alone as the Word of God. *Sola Scriptura*.” These cries provoked powerful church officials to condemn nearly all the protectors to the dungeon, stake, or sword. Satan used the powerful tools of persecution, torture, discouragement, and death to persuade protestants to comply.

Some of the better-known Protestant reformers involved in the call for reformation were Wycliffe, Huss, Jerome, Luther, Calvin, Knox, and Tyndale. As the conflict between Protestants and the Catholic Church grew, educated men throughout Europe began identifying the little horn power in Daniel 7 as the papacy.

Current Bible scholars widely identify the terrible fourth beast in Daniel 7 as civil Rome, the fourth universal kingdom of the world. Civil Rome

became a dominant power about 168 BC with the overthrow of Macedonia at the battle of Pydna. The powerful teeth of iron belonging to the terrible beast fittingly described the extraordinary strength of Rome's military legions since they were the first to use iron weapons extensively. Remember, the legs of Nebuchadnezzar's image representing this fourth kingdom in Daniel 2 were also made of iron.

### **Ten Horns Overtake Rome**

Rome was a world empire, but the world is made up of many ethnic groups. By the turn of the fifth century AD, ten ethnic nations were warring against the iron-clad authority of Rome. In AD 476, tribal nations overran civil Rome and broke her power into pieces. The reformers identified the 10 horns as the tribal nations of the Ostrogoths, Heruli, Franks, Vandals, Lombards, Visigoths, Suevi, Burgundians, Alamanni, and the Anglo-Saxons.

### **Little Horn Uproots Three Horns**

According to Daniel 7, the next step in the apocalyptic sequence was that the little horn power would become prominent after the appearance of the 10 horns. While the Christian Church began at the time of Christ, the Church in Rome grew from infancy to great political power over a period of about five centuries. According to Daniel's prophecy, the little horn power would start small, but become stronger than any of the 10 kingdoms represented by the 10 horns! Note that *after* the 10 horns are in power, *then* the little horn rises to power, uprooting three of the first 10 horns.

The little horn distinguishes itself from the other horn kingdoms by *uprooting* three of the original 10 horns. History confirms that the Roman Church (the little horn) uprooted three tribal nations known as the Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Heruli. The church destroyed the nations for political reasons that involved a well-known theological dispute on the deity of Christ called the Arian Controversy. Arius, a theologian from Alexandria, taught that Jesus was not equal to the Father. This, the Roman Church claimed, was blasphemy. In a struggle for power and dominion, the Roman Church destroyed those who followed the teachings of Arius. The Roman Christian Church had a dominating influence over the remaining seven tribal nations for a thousand years of recorded history.

### Little Horn Wages War on Saints

According to Daniel, the little horn power would have the same fierce qualities as its parent, the fourth beast. The little horn would become *stouter* than the other horns. It would have a mouth that spoke against the Most High and it would have eyes like a man. The mouth on the little horn indicates that the Church would make claims that the other horns could not make. The eyes indicate that the Church would *see* things that the other horns did not understand. The little horn would be very intelligent and therefore, more accountable to God for its acts than the other horns.

In those days, religion attracted the best minds much like science does today. Whereas scientists are the high priests of our age, clerics commanded that kind of respect in years past. As the Church became politically powerful, she became lord over the nations of Europe. The Church appointed kings and queens, decided political issues, and controlled the kings of the world. The Church claimed the right to determine eternal life or death of her subjects.

The Church was as determined and cruel in conquering her foes as her pagan parent was. The popes promised to forgive sin—past, present, and future—along with eternal salvation, to anyone willing to fight to expand the Holy Roman Empire. Millions perished in crusades fought in God’s name. Eventually, the Roman Catholic Church conquered Europe and ruled with an *iron* fist for almost 13 centuries.

At its high-water mark, the Church exercised spiritual prerogatives that blasphemed God’s truth. For example, the Church claimed infallibility for its leader: “We teach and define as a divinely revealed dogma that when the Roman pontiff speaks *ex-cathedra*, that is, when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole church, he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals. Therefore, such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consent of the church, irreformable..” (*Concerning the Infallible Teaching of the Roman Pontiff*, The Decrees of the Vatican Council, Part 3 Chapter 4)

### Little Horn Empowered 1,260 Years

Daniel predicted the little horn power would persecute God's saints for a time, times, and half a time. This phrase represents three and a half years. A *time* equals one year. *Times* represent two years, and *half-a-time* represents half a year. We know these terms represent 1,260 days because John used these time periods interchangeably.<sup>1</sup> Because this period occurred during the operation of Jubilee cycles, we must use the day for a year principle (day/year) to determine the length of this period. (See the Appendix.) Consequently, the 1,260 days of this prophecy represent 1,260 literal years. Therefore, God set a specific length of time when the papacy could persecute His saints.

Protestant reformers established the beginning of the 1,260-year period in the middle of the sixth century AD. Specifically, the dates of AD 533–538 seemed plausible, because it was when the pope began to exercise the authority of life and death over the subjects of the fragmented Roman Empire. In AD 533, Emperor Justinian decreed that the pope receive absolute power as *Corrector of Heretics*. A few years later, the Church moved to solidify her control. Roman pontiffs began a reign that would become known as the *Dark Ages*.

If AD 538 was the correct commencement date of papal authority, and if the day/year principle applies, a break or termination in the power of the papacy should have occurred 1,260 years later in 1798. So, many Protestants concluded that papal rule would end before the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Writers such as Thomas Parker (1646); Increase Mather, president of Harvard (1723); William Burnet (1724); Richard Clark (1759); and others anticipated the Roman Church power would collapse by the late 18th century!

Sure enough, General Berthier and a French army unwittingly fulfilled the 1,260-year prophecy by capturing the pope and putting him in prison in February 1798. Thus, the predicted time of little-horn rule and persecution was fulfilled.

### Little Horn Thinks to Change God's Law

Daniel predicted the little horn power would *think* to change times and laws. In AD 787, at the Second Nicean Council, the second commandment was entirely removed from the Ten Commandments, and the tenth commandment was divided into two separate commandments so that ten

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1 Revelation 12:6; 12:14

would remain. This was done so questions about the use of images or icons in worship would not come up. In addition, the fourth commandment was reduced to just a few words so questions would not be raised about the day of worship. Compare the Ten Commandments<sup>1</sup> with a Catholic Catechism to confirm these changes.

### **Little Horn Claims to be God on Earth**

Protestants for more than 400 years have argued that the blasphemous title of the pope, which in Latin is *Vicarius Filii Dei* and means *representative of the Son of God*, was a fulfillment of prophecy. In English, differing forms of this title are used: for example, “Vicar of Jesus Christ” or “Vicar of God.” Regardless of the term used, the meaning is still the same: in place of the Son of God. This title becomes particularly meaningful if you understand that popes claim divine authority. In other words, they can decide all matters regarding the work of God on earth, even whether a person is sent to hell or to heaven.

### **“Anti” Christ**

Historically, Protestants found only the papacy met all the specifications of the little horn power of Daniel 7. Even though there is debate within Protestantism today as to who the little horn power is, the chronological and historical harmony of Daniel 7 leaves no room for doubt. Unfortunately, Satan succeeded in corrupting the Christian Church so it became *anti* Christ. How clever of the Devil. He corrupted the very institution that Jesus established to save souls. Some students of the Bible and history have estimated the Roman Church sentenced over 50 million people to death for refusing to accept its doctrines during its millennial reign. During those dark years, the Devil enjoyed a tormenting rule over earth. He even obtained it through the agency that Christ had established. The Devil ever works to ruin God’s plans.

Revelation does predict the Antichrist (notice the capital A) will appear in the future. This appearing is not the rise and appearing of the Catholic Church. The Catholics will play a part in final events, but so will the Jews, Protestants, Muslims, and all other religions. The Devil himself will appear on earth and claim all power and authority that rightfully belongs to God! This will be the final blasphemy, and the Devil will physically appear

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1 Exodus 20:3–17

as Antichrist! He will claim to have God's power and authority and his miracles will deceive hundreds of millions of people.

### **History Repeated**

Satan is the Antichrist. He led the Jews to become antichrist and he succeeded in causing the Christian Church to become the same in about the same length of time! In both cases, the Devil achieved his goals by putting self-centered, ambitious, and unprincipled men into leadership. Love of money and power hold far greater reward and satisfaction to the carnal nature than following the teachings of the humble and meek carpenter from Nazareth.

### **Jesus Starts Over a Final Time**

Jesus did not give up His work of saving man because the Jews and the Christian Church became *anti-Christ*. Just as He called men and women out of Judaism to begin the Christian Church, He called those who loved and sought truth out of the Christian Church to a new movement. Historically, this movement was the Protestant Reformation. Thus, Jesus passed the privilege of giving the gospel to the Protestants. Initially, the Protestant movement of the 19th century began with great success, but Protestantism has miserably failed. Today, faithful church attendance has reached an all-time low in America.

I have used the term Christian in this review of history as a title for the Roman Catholic Church which still claims to possess the one and only true Christian faith. Although Protestants claim to be Christians, there are significant differences between Catholics and Protestants.

### **Incredible Prophetic Timing**

The timing of prophetic events is incredible. As predicted, the little horn was *wounded* in 1798 when Napoleon captured the pope and placed him in prison. Rome's iron grip was broken. As a result, the Protestant movement rapidly grew and became a dominant world influence. Truth could now flourish for the Dark Ages were over. The printing press had been invented and Bibles could be printed. Ordinary people could own and read God's Word. The Bible was no longer cloistered away in a monastery or a monk's library. Jesus raised the Protestant Movement so men and women could hear greater Bible truths such as salvation by faith, Jesus' ministry in heaven's temple, the second coming, and the prophetic meaning of 1798. The Ro-

man Catholic Church was brought down so that Bible truth might prosper. Freedom of conscience and worship became basic human rights. A priest could no longer separate people from their knowledge of God. Everyone could own a Bible and have the liberty to search God's Word for themselves.

### The Time of the End

The Bible provides a specific period at the end of the world called the *Great Day of the Lord*. This term usually refers to a time when almighty God will reveal His authority and glory. Daniel called this time period the *appointed time of the end*. Notice these texts (emphasis mine):

**“As he [Gabriel] came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. ‘Son of man,’ he said to me, ‘*understand that the vision concerns the time of the end.*’”<sup>1</sup>**

**“He said: ‘I am going to tell you what will happen later *in the time of wrath*, because the vision concerns *the appointed time of the end.*’”<sup>2</sup>**

**“Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless *until the time of the end*, for it *will still come at the appointed time.*”**

**“The king [of the North] will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful *until the time of wrath is completed*, for *what has been determined must take place.*”<sup>3</sup>**

**“*At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him* [the king of the North] *in battle*, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood.”<sup>4</sup>**

**He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words [of this prophecy] are rolled up and *sealed until the time of the end.*”<sup>5</sup>**

These six verses state that God has appointed *when* the end shall be.

1 Daniel 8:17

2 Daniel 8:19

3 Daniel 11:36

4 Daniel 11:40

5 Daniel 12:9

This is good news. God never sleeps even though we may think the hour is late or overdue.

Paul knew about the appointed time of the end and he knew it was involved with the judgment of human beings. He wrote, **“For he [the Father] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man [Jesus] he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him [Jesus] from the dead.”**<sup>1</sup> Jesus clearly confirmed the Father has *preset* the time allotted for sin much like a cook sets the time allotted for roasting food in the oven. He said to the apostles shortly before His ascension, **“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.”**<sup>2</sup>

I need to make two points from this text since it is widely misunderstood. First, Jesus affirmed that the Father has set times and dates by His own authority. Even before sin began, the Father had decided the time limit for sin. The next point is more difficult to understand. Jesus told His disciples it was not for them to know dates and times *that were not relevant* to them. In His statement to the disciples, Jesus did not mean that His disciples in centuries to come could not know the dates and times that were relevant to them. Instead, Jesus revealed an important principle. This principle is that *on or about the time of fulfillment, people will understand those specific prophecies*.

This is a critical point. The 1,260 and 2,300-year periods of Daniel 7 and 8 were far from fulfillment when Jesus made this statement to His disciples. *He did not want them to know* that the 1,260 years of Daniel 7 were in the future or the 2,300 years of Daniel 8:14 were underway. Jesus knew that this information would have destroyed the early church before it got started. This principle helps to explain why God sealed the book of Daniel until the time of the end because the prophecies *only become important* when it is time for them to be fulfilled.

If we paraphrased Jesus' thoughts in Acts 1:7, we could say, “My friends, it is not for you to know about specific dates and times the Father has set by His own authority. However, when a specific date or time does arrive, then the Holy Spirit will lead you to understand the timing and what is yet to come.”<sup>3</sup>

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1 Acts 17:31

2 Acts 1:7

3 John 16:13

### 1798 Marks the Beginning of the End

In the prophecy of Daniel 7, an apocalyptic sequence unfolds that reveals when the beginning of the end occurs. Read Daniel 7:1–12 and notice the following progression:

1. Lion
2. Bear
3. Leopard
4. Terrible monster
5. Ten horns and little horn
6. Judgment scene in heaven
7. Beasts destroyed in fire

According to the rules of interpretation presented in Chapter 1 and confirmed by history, these events occur in this specific order. According to Daniel 7:20–21, the judgment scene *begins at the end* of the 1,260 years of little horn terror. The proof for this is found in two texts. First, Daniel wrote, **“I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.”**<sup>1</sup> Daniel 7:9 describes a courtroom scene when the Ancient of Days takes his seat. When did this occur? Also, notice that verse 22 indicates that persecution will resume and last until the *saints possess the kingdom*.

Second, Daniel wrote, **“He [the little horn] will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be into his hands for a time, times and half a time. But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.”**<sup>2</sup> Here, the saints are handed over to the little horn until the court sits. The critical question is when did the court sit?

Verses 21 and 22 explain that the little horn wages war against the saints *until* the Ancient of Days, the Father, comes and convenes the heavenly

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1 Daniel 7:20–22

2 Daniel 7:25–26

court which is described in Daniel 7:9–10. Again, in verse 25, the Bible says the saints will be persecuted for 1,260 years but the court *will sit and take away* the great authority of the little horn. *The court ends the persecution by the little horn.* So, the court in heaven convenes at the end of the 1,260 years. At this time, the Father grants a restraining order against the little horn power, and the saints are freed until the deadly wound is healed. We know from Revelation 13 that the saints will be persecuted again when the trumpets begin. This coming persecution will last until the saints possess the kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

### **We Can't See into Heaven**

When Jesus gave the prophecy recorded in Daniel 7, He connected the end of the little horn's power with the Ancient of Days convening the court scene. Jesus knew that human beings could not look up into heaven and see events occurring there, so He tells us to watch for certain events on earth so we can know the timing of events in heaven. Isn't this neat?

Remember, the judgment scene in Daniel 7:9–10 began in 1798 at the end of the 1,260 years. The little horn power was wounded—not because 1,260 years had passed—but because the Ancient of Days pronounced a restraining judgment in favor of the saints. In other words, the Father ordered the papacy to receive the deadly wound. The 1,260-year time period tells us when to look for the end of papal persecution. Then, we can know that heaven's court has convened.

### **Revelation Chimes In**

If you understand the scenes in Daniel 7:9 and Revelation 4 and 5 began in 1798, two things will make a lot of sense. Let's assume that Daniel and John saw the *same* service. John's attention is focused on the book sealed with seven seals and the search for someone worthy to open the book. Daniel is focused on the persecution of the saints and the court scene. Now, observe how these two elements are directly connected! Daniel reveals the timing of the court is at the end of 1,260 years. He also tells us that after the court convenes, the books are opened and judgment begins. However, Daniel did not write how long after court convenes that the books are opened.

On the other hand, John revealed the test of worthiness that our High Priest must pass before He can officiate on behalf of human beings. We

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1 Revelation 13:5–7

know from Leviticus 16 that the high priest had to be found worthy before he could officiate on behalf of Israel on the Day of Atonement. So, we have learned that Jesus was determined worthy to receive the book sealed with seven seals when the court convened in 1798.

### **We're at the End**

When we assemble all the pieces, we can be sure that heaven is in its final phase to redeem man. Note the historical progression:

1. Lion – Babylon – 605 BC
2. Bear – Medo/Persia – 538 BC
3. Leopard – Grecia – 331 BC
4. Monster – Rome – 168 BC
5. Ten horns – AD 476
6. Little horn – AD 538
7. Judgment scene – 1798

We are well into the appointed time of the end. In fact, it is almost over. The service in heaven has been continuing for over 200 years and soon, the terrible events of the Great Tribulation will begin. God will use this coming time to test the faith of every living person and reveal those who trust in Him.

### **Summary**

For 1,260 years, the Christian Church had the opportunity to accomplish what the Jews failed to do. But alas, the Roman Church became as evil and anti-Christ as their predecessors, the Jews. Right on time, in 1798, a would-be world dictator who refused to believe in God brought the Holy Roman Empire down at the end of 1,260 years. Even though Napoleon, like King Nebuchadnezzar, didn't know the God of heaven, history and Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo confirm that there is a God that sets up kings and takes them down.<sup>1</sup>

With the failure of the Roman Church complete, Jesus then raised the Protestant movement. The Protestants received the opportunity to proclaim the truth of God's Word. This is most important because somebody on earth has to tell the rest of the world about the *appointed time of the end*. As we consider the degenerate condition of Protestantism today, we can guess why

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1 Daniel 4:17, 25

Revelation does not call the saints living at the end of the world *Protestants*. Rather, another group of people will soon appear. They are called the *remnant*.



# The Mystery of Daniel 8

There is another prophecy in Daniel that supports the 1798 date and the appointed time of the end. This prophecy also identifies 1844 as a vital year. Because these two dates harmonize, we can be certain that we are nearing the end of the time that God has allotted for earth's existence.<sup>1</sup> This prophecy found in Daniel 8 helps to confirm the nearness of Christ's return because it solidly builds upon the events described in Daniel 7.

Remember, *no one prophecy is complete within itself*, and this prophecy is no exception. In fact, this prophecy's context can only be fully understood when combined with other prophecies. Therefore, a correct interpretation of Daniel 8 may not be immediately obvious. As we consider this prophecy, keep in mind that the prophetic elements are like pieces of a puzzle, that is, each piece has several sides. The prophecy of Daniel 8 aligns with other prophecies in Daniel and Revelation to produce a harmonious result. Thus, the prophetic matrix becomes more important as we study because no one prophecy is complete within itself.

Daniel 8 is an important story serving three purposes. First, it identifies the timing when human beings will be judged. Second, it contains the first mention of the physical appearing of the Devil during earth's last days. The third purpose of this prophecy is the most essential. This prophecy (as connected with the prophecy in Daniel 9) establishes an indispensable historical reference to understand God's long-range timetable. This prophecy reveals that the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece would follow Babylon. While this may not appear significant at first, this detail provides a valuable reference point to harmonize the chronology of Daniel's visions with John's visions recorded in Revelation. Of course, all apocalyptic prophecies

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1 Acts 17:26

work in harmony with each other, for God is the revealer of mysteries. If we properly align the data, we see the historical progression as fulfillments occur, recognize our position in time, and identify those events that are just before us.

### **Important Relationships**

The timing of the judgment of the living and the physical appearing of the Devil are intimately connected. In the days just before the second coming, a series of devastating judgments will fall on the earth.<sup>1</sup> These *acts of God* will completely change life as we now know it. The living will have to make some very hard choices due to these horrific calamities. During this time, the Devil will physically appear and deceive millions. Each individual will have to decide whether to obey Jesus and trust Him for survival, or receive a brand (the mark of the beast) to buy and sell and thus survive.

The appearing of the Devil and the judgment of the living are intimately related because the Devil's appearing and his subsequent success in gaining control of the world will force everyone to either follow or reject God's commandments.

### **The Prophecy (Daniel 8:1–12)**

During the third year of Babylon's last king, King Belshazzar, Daniel received this vision.

1. **“In my vision I saw myself in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal. I looked up, and there before me was a ram with two horns, standing beside the canal, and the horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later. I watched the ram as it charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against it, and none could rescue from its power. It did as it pleased and became great. {v2–4}**
2. **“As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between its eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. It came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at it in great rage. I saw it attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering its two horns.**

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1 See Chapter 12 about the seven trumpets.

**The ram was powerless to stand against it; the goat knocked it to the ground and trampled on it, and none could rescue the ram from its power. {v5–7}**

3. **“The goat became very great, but at the height of its power the large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven. {v8}**
4. **“Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. {v9–10}**
5. **“It set itself up to be as great as the commander of the army of the Lord; it took away the daily sacrifice from the Lord, and his sanctuary was thrown down. {v11}**
6. **“Because of rebellion, the Lord’s people and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground.” {v12}**

### **The Interpretation**

The vision contains only three symbols: The ram, the goat, and the horn power. The Bible describes what the first two symbols represent. The ram represents the kingdom of Medo-Persia {v20}. The two horns represent the coregent reign of two kings, the king of the Medes and the king of the Persians. The goat represents the kingdom of Greece {v21}. The great horn represents the first king, Alexander the Great, of Greece when it became a world empire. Daniel 11:4 explained that this kingdom would be broken and divided. The four horns represent the four generals that took Alexander’s place when he died. Historians agree the kings were Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus. But who does the horn power represent? In the context of Daniel 8, horns represent *specific men* and this horn power is no exception. The horn power of Daniel 8 represents a great man who will become a king on earth during the appointed time of the end.

Most prophetic commentators conclude that the horn power is Antiochus Epiphanes IV, a Seleucid king that defiled the temple in Jerusalem in 168 BC. Others teach that the horn power in Daniel 8 is the papacy which is also represented by the little horn in Daniel 7. Both views have superficial merit if Daniel 8 is separated from other prophecies that deal with

this subject or if most of the specifications of the horn power are ignored. However, these views have one element in common. The effect of the two views is that this prophecy has nothing (or very little) to do with the final days of earth's history. Gabriel told Daniel twice that this vision *concerned* the appointed time of the end.<sup>1</sup>

I believe the horn power is *neither* Antiochius IV nor the papacy. The horn power of Daniel 8 refers to the future physical appearing of the Devil during the time of the end. The Devil will soon appear on earth in the form of a man—the man of sin that Paul predicted in 2 Thessalonians 2. Satan will be glorious, brilliant, and possess great powers. He will resemble Jesus' description given in Revelation 1. Without getting too deeply involved at this point, here are a few reasons for my view.

### Horn Power Specifications Examined

As we review the specifications of the horn power, remember that God revealed these matters in terms that Daniel was familiar with using concepts that were understood so that he (and Nebuchadnezzar) could faithfully record everything. The following seven specifications describe the horn power in Daniel 8:9–12.

1. I believe that the horn power will appear out of one of the four *winds*. Some interpret the phrase, “out of one of *them*,” to mean out of one of the four horns. There is confusion in the agreement of gender with nouns and pronouns in the Hebrew text. However, this horn power *is not* an extension of the empire of Grecia—the goat. This horn is not an extension of any beast. The horns on the ram and goat belong to specific kingdoms. However, this horn power doesn't belong to any animal. This powerful entity literally appears out of one of the four winds.
2. This horn power starts small but grows toward the south, east, and the Beautiful Land (the west). So, this horn power comes out of the north. When this horn power appears, it begins in a small way.

In Daniel's day, the Jews understood geography differently than we understand it today. For example, the Jews reckoned Egypt as the *south* even though it is southwest from Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Babylon was reckoned as the

1 Daniel 8:17, 19

2 Luke 11:31, 1 Kings 10

*north* even though it is geographically northeast.<sup>1</sup> Because the Mediterranean Sea formed the western boundary of civilization, the land of Canaan (the Beautiful Land) was considered to be the *west*. Today, we consider the land of Canaan to be in the Middle East. Isn't it interesting how points of reference change? Directions in the Bible were referenced from Israel's view of the world. There were kingdoms geographically above them—to the north; kingdoms below them—to the south; a great desert to the east, and a great sea to the west.

The northern origin of this horn power is important because destruction always came from the north. This was true for Israel, Egypt, and Babylon! Review these texts.

**“This is what the Lord says [to Israel]: ‘Look, an army is coming from the land of the north; a great nation is being stirred up from the ends of the earth.’”<sup>2</sup>**

**“I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin.’”<sup>3</sup>**

**“Egypt is a beautiful heifer, but a gadfly is coming against her from the north.”<sup>4</sup>**

**“Announce and proclaim among the nations, lift up a banner and proclaim it; keep nothing back, but say, ‘Babylon will be captured; Bel will be put to shame, Marduk filled with terror. Her images will be put to shame and her idols filled with terror.’ A nation from the north will attack her and lay waste her land. No one will live in it; both men and animals will flee away.”<sup>5</sup>**

The origin of this horn power, coming from the north is not coincidental. This horn power is a king; a fierce-looking king that understands intrigue (manipulation); and according to Daniel 8:25; 11:36, 44, this particular king of the north will cause enormous destruction.

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1 Jeremiah 4:6; 25:9

2 Jeremiah 6:22

3 Jeremiah 25:9

4 Jeremiah 46:20

5 Jeremiah 50:2–3

1. Now we need to consider a specification that no ordinary man can accomplish. This horn starts small but rapidly grows until it reaches the starry host of the heavens, then it throws some of them down and tramples them. This language means that this horn power will grow in recognition among all nations until he is more highly respected than their gods whose dwelling is not on earth. The pagans knew about and worshiped gods that lived in the heavens.<sup>1</sup> In fact, their idols of wood and stone *were representations* of their gods whom they believed to be superior to the gods of their enemies. Here are some texts that identify the starry hosts.

**“They forsook all the commands of the Lord their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal.”<sup>2</sup>**

**“He [King Manasseh] built altars in the temple of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, ‘In Jerusalem I will put my Name.’ In the two courts of the temple of the Lord, he built altars to all the starry hosts. He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced divination, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord, arousing his anger.”<sup>3</sup>**

**“He [King Josiah] did away with the pagan priests appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense on the high places of the towns of Judah and on those around Jerusalem—those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and to all the starry hosts.”<sup>4</sup>**

**“You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.”<sup>5</sup>**

**“And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars—all the heavenly array—do not be enticed into bowing down**

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1 Daniel 2:11, 28

2 2 Kings 17:16

3 2 Kings 21:4–6

4 2 Kings 23:5

5 Nehemiah 9:6

**to them and worshiping things the Lord your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven.”<sup>1</sup>**

The scriptural evidence is clear. The term starry hosts refers to highly exalted deities that the heathen worshiped. The ancients worshiped the starry hosts and gave them names such as Baal, Mercury, Zeus, Hermes, Venus, Ra, and Sol.<sup>2</sup>

In Daniel 8:10, this horn power grows in recognition until it is respected above all deities worshiped by men. This horn power will prove himself greater than the deities of heaven because he will perform great signs and miracles at will. This is how he tramples upon (shows inferior) the gods of men.<sup>3</sup>

2. After establishing himself and showing that he is greater than all the gods of men, the Devil will directly oppose the prince of the host.<sup>4</sup> In Daniel 8:25, the prince of the host is called the Prince of princes (or King of kings). Revelation 17:14 describes a direct confrontation between Satan’s armies of the earth and Jesus and His army. If the horn power is the Devil’s physical appearance, and if this vision concerns the time of the end, this could be the conflict that Daniel saw.

Daniel 8:11 says this horn power will take the daily away from the prince of the host and the place of His sanctuary will be brought low. Remember our study on Jesus’ ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. The daily is a term that refers to the constant intercession of Jesus on behalf of man. Jesus began this intercession on the day Adam and Eve sinned and continues to this very day. It was symbolized in the temple services by morning and evening offerings of atonement. This prophecy is not concerned with the end or cessation of temple services on earth. Those services were only symbols of the actual services in heaven. They did not bring salvation.<sup>5</sup> This vision is concerned with the cessation of Christ’s intercession. His work for us ends in the following ways.

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1 Deuteronomy 4:19

2 Acts 14:12

3 Revelation 13:13–14; 2 Thessalonians 2:9

4 Daniel 8:11

5 Hebrews 8:1–5; 10:1–4

- When a person dies, his life ends. There is no more intercession, for life is over.<sup>1</sup>
- If a person commits the unpardonable sin, there is no more intercession.<sup>2</sup>
- Intercession ends when a nation exhausts the limits of God's patience.<sup>3</sup>
- When Jesus terminates His patience with the nations of earth and begins the Great Tribulation there will be no more intercession.<sup>4</sup>

The horn power of Daniel 8 takes away Jesus' daily intercession in heaven's sanctuary by leading people to forfeit or despise His intercession.<sup>5</sup> The Devil brings down Christ's sanctuary, or makes His dwelling low, by leading the people of the world to reject Jesus' offer of salvation during the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In fact, Satan will persecute those who believe in the salvation of Christ. In the place of God's salvation, the Devil will offer his deceptive salvation which will be based on his cunning lies and clever manipulation.<sup>6</sup>

3. This vision concerns the appointed time of the end. The Great Tribulation will occur during the last days of earth. This is a time of rebellion because the laws of God will run contrary to the laws of men. Gabriel said that because of rebellion, the saints and the daily were given over to the Devil. He prospered in everything he did and truth was thrown down to the ground.<sup>7</sup> Many would rather receive the mark of the beast than obey Jesus. The test that is coming to the whole world is who will obey God and trust in His promises to provide for them. The second coming of Jesus does not occur until the great rebellion occurs. Paul said, **“Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.”**<sup>8</sup>

1 Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10

2 Hebrews 10:26; Matthew 12:32

3 Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 4:13–14; 18:24–28

4 Ezekiel 24:14; Revelation 8:2–5; 6:7–8

5 2 Thessalonians 2:11–12; Romans 1:18–32; Hebrews 10:29

6 Revelation 13

7 Daniel 8:12

8 2 Thessalonians 2:3

4. As Gabriel talks to Daniel about the ram, goat, and horn power, we run into a puzzling situation. Daniel 8:22–24 requires a little explanation. Gabriel said: **“The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. {23} In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise. {24} He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy those who are mighty, the holy people.”**

Verse 23 says that in the latter part of the reign of the four kings that follow Alexander, this fierce-looking king (the Devil) will arise. This statement eliminates the possibility that the horn power could be Antiochus IV or the papacy because the four generals (four horns) that gained control over Alexander’s empire were long gone before Antiochus IV appeared in 175 BC and the papacy didn’t emerge until seven centuries later.

Some will respond that the four horns are four kingdoms, not the four generals who ruled after Alexander. However, if the great horn of the goat was the first king of Greece, Alexander the Great, then who are the four horns that follow—generals or their kingdoms? In other words, the context of this vision indicates that the great horn of the goat is a man (first king) who falls at the height of his power and the beast (goat) to which the horn belongs is the nation of Greece. Therefore, the four horns that follow must also be four men.

History resolves this dispute. When Antiochus IV appeared, there weren’t four kingdoms or four kings. Seleucus defeated and killed Lysimachus in 281 BC and took over his territory. Thus, Greece was a nation of three provinces (not four) for more than 100 years when Antiochus IV destroyed Jerusalem in 168 BC.

Those who teach that Antiochus IV was the fulfillment of this prophecy misapply verses 22 and 23 and they diminish all the specifications that the horn power must fulfill listed in the other verses. The application of Antiochus IV to this prophecy has no merit if we consider *all* the specifications of the horn power. For example, the horn power takes a stand against the King of kings and the horn power will be destroyed,

but not by human power.<sup>1</sup> Antiochus IV did not fulfill this specification. Antiochus IV died a lonely, frightened, and powerless man. (See 1 Maccabees 6, an apocryphal book found in the Douay-Rheims Version of the Bible.)

Others suggest that the papacy fulfills this prophecy. This argument is somewhat stronger than those used for Antiochus IV. However, the papacy appeared almost 700 years after the four kings of Greece died. The papacy is not *an extension* of the goat, Greece. Further, the little horn of Daniel 7 is not *one* man as in Daniel 8, but a system of men. The use of horns in Daniel 7 differs from the context of Daniel 8. This is not unusual in prophecy. For example, stars in the context of Revelation 12:4 are used much differently than in Revelation 6:13. The strongest argument against the papacy being the horn power is that the papacy cannot meet *all* the biblical specifications of this horn power.

Gabriel said in Daniel 8:22–24: **“The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. {23} In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise. {24} He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy those who are mighty, the holy people.”**

Verse 22 is an explanation of what was going to happen in Greece after the fall of Alexander. With this verse, the explanation regarding Greece ends. Verses 23 and 24 are in harmony with all the specifications given in Daniel 8 and 11 about the horn power. In verse 23, Gabriel begins to describe the horn power that will appear in the distant future, the appointed time of the end.<sup>2</sup> This is my loose paraphrase of what Gabriel said in verses 23 and 24: “In the last days, when the last kings on earth will reign, when people have become completely wicked, a mean and hateful king will arise. He will become very powerful, but his power will not come from within himself. It will come because people willingly give themselves over to him. He will cause unbelievable death

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1 Daniel 8:25

2 Daniel 8:17, 19

and destruction, and no man can stop him. He will severely persecute God's remnant people."<sup>1</sup>

5. The last specification Gabriel gave is the most important one. The angel said, **“He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.”**<sup>2</sup> Compare this verse with these two verses: **“The king [of the North] will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.<sup>3</sup> He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.”**<sup>4</sup>

Three elements regarding the verses stand out. First, Jesus himself will destroy the horn power in Daniel 8.<sup>5</sup> Second, the horn power of Daniel 8 will lead the whole world into a great deception.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the horn power of Daniel 8 will exalt himself above all the different gods that people worship.<sup>7</sup>

### A Brief Review

Remember, the ram is Medo-Persia and the two horns represent the king of the Medes and the king of the Persians. The goat and its great horn that is broken off when it is at the height of power is Greece and the great horn is its first king, Alexander the Great. The four horns that take the place of the great horn are Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus. The Bible says the horn power that follows:

1. Rises out of one of the four winds (the North).
2. Starts small but rapidly gains respect.
3. Proves that it is greater than the gods of men.
4. Takes a stand against the King of Kings.

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1 Revelation 12:17; 13:5–7, 15

2 Daniel 8:25

3 Daniel 11:36

4 Daniel 11:45

5 Daniel 8:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:8

6 Daniel 8:25; Revelation 13:14

7 Daniel 8:25, 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:4

5. Brings salvation to an end because of rebellion and persecutes the saints.
6. Is a wicked, manipulative king who destroys everything, including the saints.
7. Exalts himself above all gods, but he will come to an end, not because of human power.

Now, consider these seven specifications that will occur during the appointed time of the end and there is only one conclusion that will satisfy all the specifications. The horn power of Daniel 8 symbolizes the physical appearing of the Devil in the last days.

### The 2,300 Days

After seeing the ram, goat, and horn power in vision, Daniel heard one angel ask another a five-part question.<sup>1</sup>

- a. How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled?
- b. How will the daily be taken away?
- c. How long will the rebellion that causes desolation last?
- d. How long will the sanctuary be surrendered?
- e. How long will God's people be trampled upon?

An angel called *Palmoni* in the original Hebrew, answered part of the question. In Hebrew, *Palmoni* means *holy numberer*. This name is especially fitting, for all five questions have numbers for answers! See the marginal reference on Daniel 8:13–14 about *Palmoni* in the 1611 KJV Bible translation.

Daniel heard the answer to the fourth question. He heard the holy numberer say, **“It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.”**<sup>2</sup> Keep this length of time in mind, for this prophecy pinpoints the very year when the books in heaven<sup>3</sup> were opened and when the third seal in Revelation 6 was broken.

In the KJV, Daniel 8:14 interprets the Hebrew term, *ereb boger* as days (plural) even though the term is singular: evening/morning. This is not faulty, for 2,300 *ereb boger* in English has to be plural. However, the Hebrew sense of *ereb boger* is simply a unit of time, a *day*. The Bible uses the word

1 Daniel 8:13

2 Daniel 8:14

3 Daniel 7:10

boger in Judges 19:26 and 2 Samuel 13:4 and boger simply refers to the morning or the dawn part of the day. The Hebrew word ereb is used in the Old Testament more than 40 times to refer to the evening part of a day. From Genesis 1:5, a day consists of an evening and a morning. Evidently, Daniel 8:14 is speaking of 2,300 days due to the similar use of ereb and boger in many texts.

### **Conclusion**

We have uncovered several pieces of the prophetic story from Daniel 8. We now know who the ram, goat, and horn power are, but what do the 2,300 days have to do with Daniel's vision? In the next chapter, you will see that the 2,300 days is the period of time that separates the ram and goat scenes from the horn power! The chronology loosely follows this pattern: ram—goat—2,300 days—horn power.

### **Does Antiochus Epiphanes Fulfill Daniel 8?**

Because some insist that Antiochus IV fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel 8, I will investigate a few details about this position for the sake of discussion. Daniel 8:14 predicts that the temple would be cleansed (KJV) *after* the 2,300-day period. However, the text doesn't say which temple would be cleansed. Those who believe that Antiochus IV was the horn power of Daniel 8 insist the earthly temple is the object of this prophecy and the 2,300 days are literal. Therefore, they conclude 2,300 days cannot be interpreted as a day for a year (Jubilee units—See the Appendix).

According to 1 Maccabees 1:50–57, Antiochus IV desecrated the temple in Jerusalem on the 15th of Casleu (Jewish month, Kislev; our month, December) in 167 BC. And 1 Maccabees 4:52–54 says the rebuilt temple was purified and reconsecrated, and the services resumed three years later on December 14, 164 BC. In 2 Maccabees 10:1–8, it confirms that the temple was cleansed and services resumed at this time. The problem is that the Bible says the sanctuary would be cleansed *after* 2,300 days expired. If the purification of the rebuilt temple by Judas Maccabee occurred on December 14, 164 BC, this would have required the commencement of the 2,300 days in 171 BC, a full 3.3 years prior to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus. Such a claim for the fulfillment of the 2,300 days is therefore invalid.

Others terminate the 2,300 days with the death of General Nicanor on March 27, 160 BC to mark the end of the 2,300 days. But wait, this places the beginning of the 2,300 days in 166 BC and nothing of significance began in 166 BC. The question that goes unanswered is why date the 2,300 days from the death of Nicanor? What made his death a prophetic fulfillment? History shows that the hostilities against Israel did not end with his death. For example, King Demetrius was successful in killing Judas Maccabee<sup>1</sup> about two months *after* Nicanor was killed and the wars against Israel didn't end there. In May, 159 BC, about one year after the death of Nicanor, "Alcimus ordered the wall of the inner court of the sanctuary to be torn down, thus destroying the work of the prophets."<sup>2</sup>

Many nations warred against Israel for some time after Judas Maccabee died.<sup>3</sup> The "threat" (as some put it) against the temple did not disappear with the death of Nicanor. History clearly disputes the claim that *threats* against Jerusalem disappeared when Nicanor died. So, how can there be a fulfillment of the prophecy when the time required by the prophecy was not met? Isn't it fair to say that God meant 2,300 days when He revealed the prophecy?

These matters of record demonstrate that there is no historical substance to the assertions of many that Antiochus Epiphanes IV fulfilled this prophecy. The facts surrounding Antiochus are so distant from the specifications of the prophecy, one wonders why so many defend this conclusion.

### **Does the Papacy Fulfill Daniel 8?**

Because many scholars insist that the horn power of Daniel 8 is the papacy, I have included a few remarks about this conclusion for your consideration. Protestantism was born within the Roman Catholic Church in much the same way that Christianity came from the cradle of Judaism. Unfortunately, religious organizations, by nature, place loyalty and allegiance above truth. The reason for this is simple. All religious organizations embrace a collection of teachings which they believe to be God's truth and any deviation from their beliefs is considered schismatic and counterproductive.

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1 1 Maccabees 9:18

2 1 Maccabees 9:54

3 1 Maccabees 9:64

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As Protestantism developed, its followers greatly suffered from the wrath of the Universal Church. Protestants appealed to the Bible alone as the rule of faith. This claim, of course, only brought more condemnation from Catholic Church leaders who were determined to defend ecclesiastical rules and manmade doctrines. When Protestants began to see that the Church was unwilling to change, many Protestant expositors concluded that the little horn of Daniel 7 was the papacy. They could trace the history and power of the apostate Church back to its Roman origin. Because there is a great deal of similarity between the little horn of Daniel 7 and the horn power of Daniel 8, Protestants *assumed* that Daniel 8 was a repetition and enlargement of Daniel 7.

In the late 16th century, two Jesuit scholars from Spain, Francisco Ribera and Luis Alcasar, introduced prophetic theories to refute the claims of Protestants that the papacy was the little horn of Daniel 7 or the horn power of Daniel 8. Their intention was to meet Protestants on their own ground *Sola Scriptura* and refute their charges against the Roman Catholic Church. As a result of their works, two conflicting schools of prophetic thought emerged. Alcasar's primary position was that Revelation's story was descriptive of the victory of early Christians over the Jewish nation and the overthrow of pagan Rome. He concluded Nero was the Antichrist. Incidentally, Alcasar also concluded that Antiochus Epiphanes IV fulfilled the prophecies of Daniel 8 and 9.

Ribera also introduced a prophetic concept that was designed to redirect Protestant accusations that the pope was the Antichrist. Ribera concluded that Antichrist is a single individual who will appear just before Jesus' second coming. He claimed that Antichrist would bitterly persecute the saints, abolish the Christian religion, and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. The Jews would receive him, and he would pretend to be God. Then, he would conquer the world in three-and-one-half years.

These opposing views were given to Protestants to dissuade them from identifying the papacy as the Antichrist. For about 200 years, Protestants stood firm on their prophetic position: The Roman Catholic Church is the Antichrist of Daniel and Revelation. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Protestants began to change their minds. A survey of Protestant prophetic literature since 1826 shows that Protestant expositors began to drift away from their long-standing claim that the Roman Catholic Church

was the Antichrist. Today, most Protestant expositors deny that the Roman Catholic Church is prophetically significant. Since Protestants do not have a historical setting or chronological process by which to mark the passage of time, they have arrived at many prophetic conclusions that are without any merit. It is ironic that today, most Protestants have adopted a modified version of Ribera's counter-reformation claim.

Here are five reasons why some Protestants teach that the little horn of Daniel 7 and the horn power of Daniel 8 is the papacy:

1. The attitudes and activities of both horns toward God are similar.
2. Both entities are symbolized as horns.
3. The arrogant claims of both horns are blasphemous.
4. Both horns build on deception.
5. The historical conflict between Protestants and Catholics led Protestants to conclude that almost everything in the Bible regarding the Antichrist is the papacy. The prophetic discovery that the Devil himself will appear on earth claiming to be God is a relatively new prophetic concept. For this reason, the term *Antichrist* has taken on an even greater meaning.

### **Daniel 7's Little Horn & Daniel 8's Horn Power are Different**

Here are six reasons why the little horn of Daniel 7 and the horn power of Daniel 8 cannot be the same:

1. The little horn of Daniel 7 came up out of the fourth beast, Rome. The horn power of Daniel 8 does not derive its strength from any nation. It just appears out of nothing.
2. The little horn of Daniel 7 comes after the 10 horns have become dominant in world history (about AD 500). The horn power of Daniel 8 is not an extension of the goat, Greece. In fact, Daniel 8 only has three symbolic elements within it: a ram, a goat, and the horn power. Gabriel said twice that the vision of Daniel 8 concerns the distant future, the appointed time of the end. We know that the ram and goat occurred between 538 and 168 BC. This leaves the final symbol to occur at the appointed time of the end.
3. The context of Daniel 7 requires that the little horn be a kingdom that lasts for a time, times and half a time. However, the context of Daniel 8 requires this horn power to be one man, a fierce-looking king.

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4. Daniel 8 describes the horn power as taking his stand against the Prince of princes (King of kings). While one could say that all the armies of the world will take their stand against the God of heaven, Daniel 8 calls this horn power the *leader* of the conflict against the Prince of princes.
  5. The horn power of Daniel 8 is brought to his end by divine power—not by man. This contrasts with the fact that the little horn is quite mortal. Berthier almost destroyed the little horn in 1798.
  6. Daniel 11:36–45 is a parallel passage that describes the works and activities of this horn power *at the appointed time of the end* which is a time of great wrath.<sup>1</sup> We also find a very close harmony of these events explained in 2 Thessalonians 2, Revelation 9, and Revelation 13.

There is further descriptions about the horn power in Daniel 11 and Revelation 9, 11, 13, and 17. This much is certain. Anyone or any system opposed to Jesus' teachings as revealed in the Bible is anti-Christ. Antiochus IV was anti-Christ. The papacy is anti-Christ and so are all the religious systems of the world. However, the father of this opposition is the soon-to-appear Devil, the great Antichrist.

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1 Compare Daniel 8:19 and 11:36.





# Daniel 8's Vision Revealed in Daniel 9

After Daniel saw the ram, goat, horn power, and the holy numberer, Gabriel went to Daniel with the instruction to tell him the meaning of the vision. So, Gabriel flew to Daniel and began talking.<sup>1</sup> Before explaining the vision to Daniel, Gabriel emphasized to Daniel that this vision actually concerned “the appointed time of the end.”<sup>2</sup> This vision occurred about 25 centuries ago and the phrase, “the appointed time of the end,” means exactly what it says. This phrase indicates that God has appointed a time to end the problem of sin. Have we reached the appointed time of the end? Are we living in the last decade? How can anyone tell? Just as a navigator looks at the stars to know his latitude and longitude, there must be evidence showing our chronological timing if we are to know when the appointed time of the end has arrived. Without chronological markers, we are left with nothing to mark our position in the passage of time.

Many people challenge the idea that we are living at the end of the world's history. They ask, “What evidence do you have to show that the end has come?” The world has seen WWI, WWII, and dozens of smaller wars since. So how can we know for sure that we are living at the end of the world? Bible prophecy provides the answer. Jesus has declared the end from the beginning<sup>3</sup> and the Holy Spirit reveals what is going to happen to those who are diligent students of the Scriptures.<sup>4</sup>

The vision of Daniel 8 serves an important function. The vision connects an event on earth and one in heaven with one time period. By connecting

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1 Daniel 8:15

2 Daniel 8:19

3 Isaiah 45:21

4 John 16:13

events in heaven with events on earth, God allows us to know the dates of events in heaven that we otherwise could not see. Think about this. Because we can’t see what is going on in heaven, we can know what is going on in heaven by understanding prophetic fulfillments on earth.

### **The Vision of Evenings and Mornings**

I call the vision in Daniel 8 the vision of the evenings and mornings because this is its essential point.<sup>1</sup> For example, a letter of approval is so-called because it is a letter of approval. The details concerning the approval are secondary. Likewise, the primary purpose of this vision is about the 2,300 mornings and evenings. You will need some background information about Israel at the time of the vision to appreciate the importance of this vision.

By 605 BC, God had reached His limit with Israel’s long history of rebellion, so He sent them into Babylonian captivity. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God let Israel know their captivity would last 70 years. **“For twenty-three years . . . the word of the Lord has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened.”**<sup>2</sup> **“Therefore the Lord Almighty says this: ‘Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations.’”**<sup>3</sup> **“This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”**<sup>4</sup>

When Daniel saw the ram and goat in vision, he already knew that Babylon was going to fall, and he also knew that the 70 years of captivity that Jeremiah predicted were about to expire. Later, Daniel wrote, **“I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.”**<sup>5</sup>

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1 Daniel 8:26

2 Jeremiah 25:3

3 Jeremiah 25:8–9

4 Jeremiah 25:11

5 Daniel 9:2–3

Daniel was eager for his people to be freed so they could return to Jerusalem. The hope of returning to the homeland and the destiny of his people burned deeply within his heart; for Daniel loved his God, his people, and his homeland. Since Gabriel’s remarks didn’t address the destiny of Israel, Daniel fasted and prayed for more information. Later, Gabriel returned for a second visit with Daniel bringing good news and bad news. This visit is recorded in Daniel 9.

### A Comprehensive Plan

When Gabriel returned to Daniel, the angel didn’t say very much, but the conversation between them sounds as though their discussion picked up where it had ended. Daniel said, **“While I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice.”**<sup>1</sup>

Remember, in the earlier vision, Gabriel explained to Daniel that the ram with two horns represented the kings of Media and Persia. Since the time of that vision, Daniel had heard reports about their successful conquests. He also knew within his heart that they would eventually overthrow Babylon. So, Daniel was not surprised when the time came for fulfillment.<sup>2</sup> When Gabriel returned to Daniel the second time, Babylon had fallen. Daniel had witnessed the fulfillment. Daniel began to understand God’s plans. Due to his visions of the ram and goat,<sup>3</sup> the four beasts,<sup>4</sup> and King Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of the image,<sup>5</sup> he now knew that other kingdoms would rise and fall.

The old prophet realized that God’s timetable was much more encompassing than just 70 years of captivity in Babylon. So, by the time Gabriel returned for the second visit, Daniel was beginning to wonder about the larger view of God’s purpose for Israel. It is hard for humans to grasp the scope of God’s plans! We think small because we are small. For us, life is short and so are most of our plans.

So, Gabriel explained to Daniel that God’s purpose for Israel was much greater than just setting Israel free to return to Jerusalem. *God wanted Israel*

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1 Daniel 9:21

2 See the story of Belshazzar in Daniel 5.

3 Daniel 8

4 Daniel 7

5 Daniel 2

*to accomplish something for Him.* However, before we can examine what God wanted of Israel, we need to demonstrate a harmony that exists between history and the fulfillment of prophecy.

### Historical Harmony

It is widely accepted that Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians in the autumn of 538 BC. Although the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon, they were no better at retaining their power. About two centuries after they came to power, Alexander the Great defeated the Persians at the decisive battle of Arbela. Historians generally agree that Alexander established Greece as a world empire by 331 BC. The fall of Babylon, the rise and fall of Medo-Persia, and the rise and fall of Greece are very important points in this study because history confirms the three-kingdom sequence, and the names of the rising kingdoms.

In his vision, Daniel saw that the goat (Greece) would become very great, but at the height of its power the large horn would be broken off and in its place, four prominent horns would grow up. At the zenith of world power, Greece’s first king, Alexander the Great, died an untimely death at age 32. Daniel was also shown that Alexander’s kingdom would not be given to his heirs<sup>1</sup> and history confirms that it was not. About 25 years after Alexander’s death, his empire was divided among his four leading generals: Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucius, and Ptolemy. The historical record confirms the sequence and chronology of Daniel’s vision. This is important because we can see a pattern emerging. An apocalyptic prophecy always has a beginning and an ending point in time, and the events between those points always follow chronologically! This consistent rule can be observed throughout the 17 prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

### The Second Visit—Good News, Bad News

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel at the second visit,<sup>2</sup> Gabriel said, **“I have now come to give you insight and understanding. . . . Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision** [of the evenings and mornings you saw earlier].”<sup>3</sup>

Daniel’s primary concern at Gabriel’s second visit was how Israel would be restored. Daniel knew that the 70 years of Babylonian captivity were just

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1 Daniel 11:4

2 Daniel 9

3 Daniel 9:22–23

about over, and he longed to see an immediate fulfillment of the prophecy.<sup>1</sup> Daniel wanted to go home. He wondered how the vision of the evenings and mornings related to the restoration of Israel, so he fasted and prayed to the Lord for greater understanding. When Gabriel appeared, the angel immediately began talking about Israel, the restoration of Jerusalem, and the temple because this was the burden on Daniel’s heart.

Jeremiah’s prophecy about the Babylonian captivity was fulfilled the year of Gabriel’s second visit. Right on time, Cyrus, King of Persia, released Israel from the 70 years of its captivity. The decree was recorded in Ezra. **“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 [freeing Israel] throughout his realm.”**<sup>2</sup>

### The Future of Israel

As the second visit began, Gabriel said, **“As soon as you began to pray, a word went out [about your petition from your people Israel], which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the word and understand the [first segment of the] vision.”**<sup>3</sup> Then, the angel outlined specific major points concerning the future of Israel.<sup>4</sup>

1. Seventy “sevens” are granted to your people to:
  - a. pay the penalty for their wicked deeds as a nation
  - b. end national apostasy
  - c. bring in everlasting righteousness
  - d. seal up the vision and prophecy
  - e. anoint the Most Holy
2. From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One appears would be 69 “sevens.”
3. In the middle of the 70th week, the Anointed One would be cut off from His people. He would also confirm the covenant with His own blood, and He would end sacrifices and offerings.
4. Jerusalem and its sanctuary would be destroyed after they were rebuilt.

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1 Daniel 9:19

2 Ezra 1:1

3 Daniel 9:23

4 Daniel 9:24–27

5. Wars and desolations would continue until the end of Jerusalem.
6. The one who causes desolations on the earth will continue until the end of time.

The Hebrew word in Daniel 9:24 translated “weeks” (KJV) and “sevens” (NIV) is “shabua.” Shabua means a week or a seven. There are 17 instances where this word is used in the Old Testament and all of them refer to a literal week or seven days. Daniel 10:2–3 and Daniel 9:24 use the *same* word: shabua. This point is important in our study because it relates to calculations used when we study the Jubilee Calendar.

### Comments

Gabriel told Daniel that the Anointed One (the Messiah) would appear 69 weeks after the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was issued. This indicated to Daniel that Jerusalem would be restored, and that the Holy One of Israel would now *come at a specific time*.

The Jews knew that the Anointed One (Messiah) would come through Israel, for Isaiah had prophesied: **“The virgin will conceive and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”**<sup>1</sup> **“In the future he will honor Galilee of the nations.”**<sup>2</sup> **“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”**<sup>3</sup> **“And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”**<sup>4</sup>

Daniel was thrilled and disappointed with the information Gabriel gave him. Daniel was thrilled to learn that Messiah, the promised King of Israel would come at an appointed time. Daniel also recognized that Messiah would appear several centuries later. The news that crushed Daniel was the fact that someday, Jerusalem and the temple would *again* be destroyed. Daniel wondered if God would forget His people.

### An Appointment with Messiah

Gabriel told Daniel that the time from the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah, the Prince, appeared would be 69 weeks (literally

1 Isaiah 7:14

2 Isaiah 9:1

3 Isaiah 9:2

4 Isaiah 9:6

69 *sevens*). The Jews reckoned time in two ways. The first was literal time. A week was seven evenings and mornings. They also reckoned time in Jubilee units. For example, a Jubilee week is seven years in length: a year for each day of the week. God gave this system of time to Israel at the Exodus.<sup>1</sup> Under this system, 69 weeks represented 483 years ( $69 \times 7 = 483$ ).

### The Jubilee Rule

Although the Bible does not specifically describe a method for prophetic dating, the Jubilee Calendar does provide a consistent process to understand prophetic timing.<sup>2</sup> I understand that God established the Jubilee Calendar for three reasons: First, it was a recurring cycle of time that Israel would renew its faith in Him and He would show His affection for Israel through events that transpired every 50th year. Second, Jubilee cycles kept all other timing cycles together in a synchronous form. Last, God implemented Jubilee cycles so that He could provide the mathematics and events necessary for prophetic calculations over long periods of time without requiring a lot of dates and events outside the Bible.

I have learned of a consistent use of the day/year principle in prophecy which conforms to the fourth rule of apocalyptic prophecy in Chapter 1. *If a time period falls within the operation of the Jubilee Calendar and that time period occurs in one of the 17 apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, then the time period requires the use of the day/year principle.*

This simple principle explains why some time periods are day/year, and others are not. For example, I believe the Jubilee Calendar expired in 1994. This means that the 3.5 years of Daniel 7:25 are to be interpreted as 1,260 years using the day/year principle, while the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 are to be interpreted as 1,000 literal years.

### Jubilee Weeks

Remember, God associates events in heaven with events on earth so that we can understand the timing of actions in heaven. According to the prophecy, Jesus was going to leave heaven and come to earth as a baby. Gabriel told Daniel to start counting the 69 weeks when the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was given. The weeks could have been literal weeks or Jubilee weeks, but God meant Jubilee weeks. This is how the story unfolded.

1 Leviticus 25 & 26

2 See the Appendix.

### Which Decree?

Persian kings issued four decrees for the Jews to restore their homeland! Cyrus gave the first decree in 536 BC.<sup>1</sup> Darius gave the second in 519 BC.<sup>2</sup> Artaxerxes gave the third and fourth decrees in 457 and 445 BC.<sup>3</sup> How can we know which degree God intended for the Jews to begin the 69 weeks?

I believe God intentionally kept this question shrouded in a mystery just as He has intentionally kept the date of Christ’s second advent a mystery. The knowledge of the timing of both advents belongs to those who are studying, watching, and praying. As in the days of Christ’s first advent, the negligent, even highly respected religious officials, will be caught by surprise at the second coming.

God did not reveal *which* decree would start the prophecy. The question of which decree was correct kept the Jews watching and wondering. For example, 69 weeks after 536 BC is 53 BC (a little early for Jesus’ ministry on earth); 69 weeks after the second decree in 519 BC is 36 BC (still too early). The date for 69 weeks after the third decree in 457 BC is AD 27 (right on time). The 445 BC decree is not historically plausible because AD 40 is too late for the historical appearance of Messiah.

The Jews’ prophetic interest must have been piqued as 53 BC drew near, but Messiah didn’t appear. Then, 36 BC must have raised prophetic interest again, but there was no Messiah. So, it is understandable that when AD 27 arrived, prophetic interest was greater than before. Notice that Luke carefully documents the beginning year of Christ’s ministry by telling who is ruling: **“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene.”**<sup>4</sup> **“The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.”**<sup>5</sup> That very year, Jesus was baptized, being 30 years of age. Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit and the Father commended Jesus for His faithfulness to the Plan of Salvation.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Ezra 1

2 Ezra 6

3 Ezra 7; Nehemiah 2

4 Luke 3:1

5 Luke 3:15

6 Luke 3:21–23

### The Wise Men

The story of the birth of Jesus often includes the wise men, but many people don’t know that the wise men were students of prophecy. They came from the east (an area around Babylon), where they had found and studied Daniel’s writings. They knew that a priest in Israel had to be 30 years of age before beginning his ministry. So, they calculated an approximate time when the 483 years would end and then subtracted 30 years from their conclusion to determine the year of Jesus’ birth.

When we consider that their round-trip journey to see baby Jesus could have taken up to two years, we detect the intensity of their desire to see the Messiah. Wise men do not go to such extremes on a whim. Like the prophets Simeon and Anna, they, too, longed to *personally* see the Savior of the world. The fact that the wise men came to Bethlehem at the correct time is another confirmation that Artaxerxes’ decree in 457 BC was the correct decree for beginning the 69 weeks. This is a very strong argument, for there is no other prophecy in the Bible pinpointing the time of Messiah’s appearing other than Daniel 9.

What is so ironic is that these *Gentiles* were watching and waiting for the sign of Messiah while the Jewish leaders were in total ignorance. Perhaps some of the Jewish elders had experienced false Messianic excitement before so they were not excited. What does this say about trusting religious leaders?

### A Special Year

There is another point about the 457 BC date of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Although we won’t discuss it in detail here, Artaxerxes’ decree in 457 BC is the only decree that occurred in a Jubilee year. The connection of Artaxerxes’ decree with a Jubilee year is not coincidental. Seventy weeks equals 490 years ( $70 \times 7 = 490$ ). Seventy weeks also equals 10 Jubilee cycles ( $49 \times 10 = 490$ ). The fact that Messiah died in the middle of the 70th week confirms a greater issue than the 70-week prophecy. Later we will see that the Jubilee year is both symbolic of God’s restoration and redemption and symbolic of God’s retaliation upon His enemies.

### The 2,300 Evenings and Mornings

We now return to Gabriel’s second visit in Daniel 9. Gabriel told Daniel that 70 weeks were *decreed* upon Israel. The Hebrew word translated *decreed* comes from the Hebrew word *chathak* and it means to cut off, as from a

larger item. For example, if you granted your son one hour to play outdoors, you may require that he first take out the trash. In this illustration, the time required to take out the trash is part of his one hour—thus, the trash gets removed quickly. So, Gabriel told Daniel that 70 weeks had been cut off from a longer period—the previous prophecy containing 2,300 evenings and mornings. This small detail solves a big problem, for on his first visit, Gabriel did not reveal *when* the 2,300 evenings and mornings began. Since we know that the 70 weeks were cut off of some time frame, we can assume (for the moment) two conclusions. First, the 70 weeks are cut off from the 2,300 evenings and mornings. Second, both prophecies share the same beginning point.

Here are six reasons why I believe the 70 weeks are a subset of the longer 2,300 evenings and mornings’ vision and why they begin at the same time.

1. Daniel 8:13 asks five questions. Gabriel answered each of the five questions with a specific number of days. Daniel 8:14 provides the answer to the fourth question about the length of time the sanctuary would be surrendered when Gabriel said there would be 2,300 evenings and mornings. The angel said nothing about the beginning or conclusion of this time period—only the length. However, we can be sure that the 2,300 evenings and mornings are central to the context of the vision. That is, it has to do with the historical setting of the ram and the goat, and the appearing of the horn power at an appointed time.
2. In the vision of Daniel 8, Daniel did not mention a sanctuary. So, what does the five-part question in verse 13 have to do with the symbols of this vision? The 2,300 days separate the ram and goat from the appearing of the horn power. Because apocalyptic prophecies are not complete within themselves, they are dependent on each other to complete the bigger picture. The five-part question of Daniel 8:13 reveals five *numerical* issues that involve timing. Palmoni answered the remaining four questions with numbers in Daniel 12.
3. The time period of 2,300 evenings and mornings refers to a span of 2,300 years. Since creation, a day consists of an evening and a morning.<sup>1</sup> So, the holy numberer (Palmoni) is talking about 2,300 days; evenings and mornings are translated as days. Under the operation of the Jubilee

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1 Genesis 1

Calendar, a day equals a year. In fact, our discussion about 70 weeks revealed that God reckons time in Jubilee units. So, if the 70 weeks are days/years, the 2,300 days must also be 2,300 years.

4. Bible scholars have had considerable discussion regarding the starting point of the 2,300 days. Many scholars have *suspected* that the 70 weeks and the 2,300 days began at the same time; however, there is a way to conclusively demonstrate this point. There is credible evidence that the 70 weeks were cut off from the 2,300 days, but were they cut off at the beginning of the 2,300 days? In other words, do both time periods share the same beginning point? The seven seals provide confirmation that both 70 weeks and 2,300 days share the same starting point.

The judgment scene in Daniel 7:9 began in 1798, at the end of the 1,260 years. If we calculate the date for the cleansing of the sanctuary as 1844 (2,300 years after 457 BC), there is harmony from the sum of the prophetic parts. In 1798, Jesus began opening the seven seals. Later, in 1844, He opened the third seal which contained a judgment hour message. Notice how the elements come together. The 70 weeks began in 457 BC<sup>1</sup> and Jesus personally confirmed this date by appearing and dying on time. The judgment scene in Daniel 7 began in 1798 because the little horn power was broken right on time. If Jesus began opening the seals in 1798, the timing of the third seal will easily fit into 1844 because the third seal is a *heavenly* sanctuary message! The harmony of these points demonstrates that the only option for starting the 2,300 years is with the decree that starts the 70 weeks. In this case, three separate prophecies link together to confirm the timing of each prophecy!

5. Palmoni said **“It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.”**<sup>2</sup> Palmoni could have been talking about the sanctuary in Jerusalem that was lying in ruins, or the sanctuary in heaven where Jesus serves.<sup>3</sup> Palmoni was talking about the sanctuary in heaven for it is the only true sanctuary that existed when the 2,300-day prophecy in the vision was fulfilled. Palmoni was saying that 2,300 years after the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, then heaven’s sanctuary will begin to be restored. The restoration of heaven’s sanctu-

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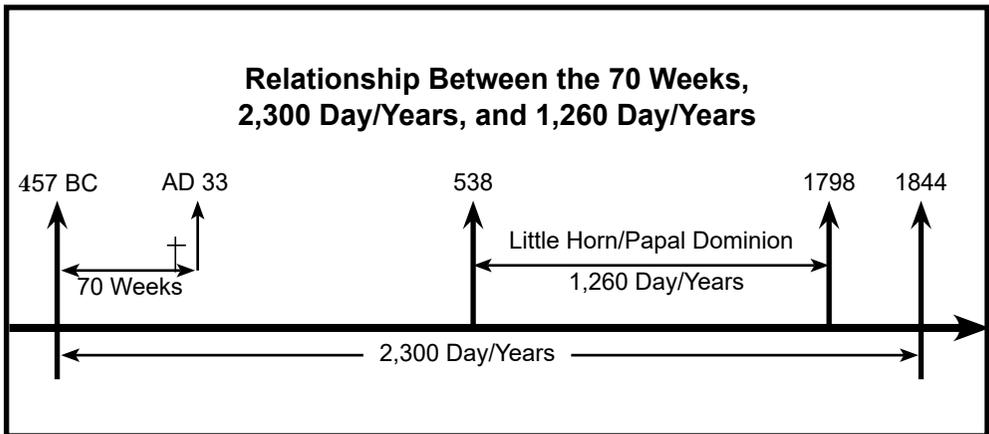
1 Daniel 9

2 Daniel 8:14

3 Hebrews 8:1–5

ary is the removal of sin from heaven's sanctuary. This occurs as Jesus decides the case of each person. Jesus places the sins of each person on the sinner's head or on the scapegoat, the Devil. They no longer remain in the books of heaven. This is the cleansing, the judgment scene that Daniel saw in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

- We know that the 70 weeks began with Artaxerxes' decree in 457 BC. We also know that the 70 weeks were cut off from a longer time frame. Later, we will demonstrate that Jesus fulfilled the 70-week prophecy by dying in the middle of the 70th week. His death confirms the decree given in 457 BC, which 2,300 years later is connected to the timing of His ministry as our High Priest in heaven's sanctuary. If the 2,300-year prophecy began when the 70-week prophecy began, then 1798 and 1844 synchronize.



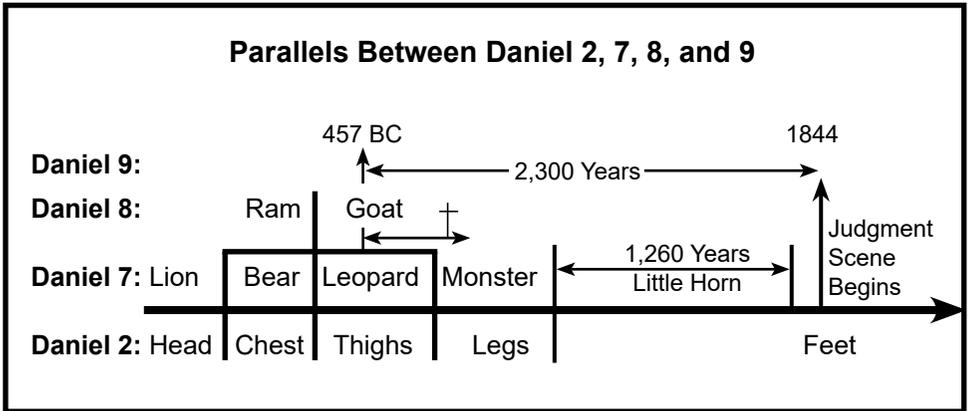
### Daniel's Prophetic Relationships

We now need to bring all the details together so we can understand the relationships between Daniel's four prophecies. Study the chart to identify the following relationships.

- The death of Jesus confirms the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 BC.
- The 2,300 years, when added to 457 BC, brings us to AD 1844.
- The intimate relationship between events terminating on earth in 1798 and the judgment scene occurring in 1844.
- Daniel 8 contributes to this historical matrix by giving additional

<sup>1</sup> Daniel 7:10

information about the Medo-Persian and Grecian Empires. Daniel 8 also mentions a great king (not shown on this chart) who will appear at the *appointed time of the end*.



When Jesus ministered on earth, he established the chronological parallel between the 2,300 days of Daniel 8 and the 70 weeks of Daniel 9. Three keys support the connection between these two time periods.

**KEY I -- A Day for a Year**

The Bible consistently follows this rule: All 17 *apocalyptic time periods* occurring during the operation of the Jubilee Calendar are to be interpreted in day/year units. After the Jubilee Calendar expires, all apocalyptic time periods are to be interpreted in literal units of time.<sup>1</sup>

If we apply this rule, we find consistent harmony between history and prophecy. For example, most historians now calculate the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar as AD 27, which is exactly 483 years from the decree in 457 BC by Artaxerxes. Jesus, who set the time of His appearing and had the information delivered to Daniel, appeared when He said He would—right on time!

**KEY II – Jesus Died at the Appointed Time**

Gabriel said that in the middle of the 70th *seven*, the Anointed One would be cut off (literally cut down). Jesus would also confirm the covenant with many, and He would put an end to sacrifices and offerings.

1 See the Appendix.

Since a *seven* represents seven years, the 70th week of this prophecy is seven years long. The 70th week began with AD 27 and reached to AD 33 because a week is measured from Sunday to Saturday *inclusively*. The middle day of every week is Wednesday. Consequently, Jesus died in the spring of AD 30 which is the Wednesday year or middle year of the 70th week of years:

1. Sunday year = AD 27
2. Monday year = AD 28
3. Tuesday year = AD 29
4. **Wednesday year = AD 30**
5. Thursday year = AD 31
6. Friday year = AD 32
7. Sabbatical year = AD 33

These facts support AD 30 as the year Jesus died.

- Artaxerxes gave the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in the spring of 457 BC.<sup>1</sup> The 70th week began in the spring of AD 27. Jesus was crucified in the spring, at Passover, which the Jews always celebrated in the spring.<sup>2</sup>
- Passover, the 15th day of the first month, fell on Saturday in that year.<sup>3</sup>
- Gabriel indicated that Messiah was to be *cut off* (literally translated: cut down). His own people cut the Messiah down. Stephen, the first Christian martyr knew that his own people had killed the Messiah. He thundered to the Sanhedrin regarding the crucifixion of Jesus, **“You have betrayed and murdered him”!**<sup>4</sup>
- Messiah put an end to sacrifices and offerings Paul said, “[God] **canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.**”<sup>5</sup>
- Jesus confirmed the covenant. He said, **“This is my blood of the**

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1 Ezra 8

2 John 19:14

3 John 19:31

4 Acts 7:52

5 Colossians 2:14

**covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>1</sup> Paul wrote, “This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.”<sup>2</sup>**

According to the prophecy, Jesus died *exactly on time* in the year AD 30. At the very moment the High Priest was about to slay the Passover lamb in Jerusalem’s temple, Jesus, hanging from the cross, the Passover Lamb of God, died for the sins of the world.

An angel immediately flew to the temple and tore the heavy temple veil from top to bottom that separated the Holy place from the Most Holy place. This act signified the end of the sacrificial system. Jesus had confirmed the covenant of salvation with His own blood. The religious services which God required of Israel were now fulfilled. Their primary meaning was fully explained. The penalty for sin the services had modeled was now paid in full. The shadow of the earthly temple disappeared in the glory of Christ’s resurrection. The ceremonies that pointed to Calvary were left behind at the cross.

When the angel tore the temple veil open, the great multitude who had gathered in the courtyard of the temple for the Passover service stood in awe at the scene. For the very first time, ordinary people peered into the Most Holy room of the temple and the sole property of the room was darkness. The ark of the covenant which Jeremiah had hidden at the time of the Babylonian captivity had not been found and, in fact, it remains hidden! How symbolic. Darkness not only filled the inner place of Israel’s religious shrine, but darkness also filled the hearts of the worshipers.

### **KEY III - The Jews’ Final Opportunity**

Let’s review Gabriel’s comments to Daniel concerning the Jews.

Seventy *sevens* (or weeks) are granted to your people to:

- a. pay the penalty for their wicked deeds as a nation
- b. end national apostasy
- c. bring in everlasting righteousness
- d. seal up the vision and prophecy
- e. anoint the Most Holy

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1 Matthew 26:28

2 Hebrews 2:3

The first comment Gabriel made is that 70 *sevens* are granted to *your people*, Daniel. We cannot overlook the importance of this time period and the people to whom it applies. The first two specifications relate to Jewish behavior within the specified period and the last three refer to promised glory if the Jews would cooperate with God.

The Jews knew they were special to God. They knew that God had chosen them, through Abraham, to be trustees of His covenant. They knew that Messiah would come through their bloodline. However, they ignored God’s conditional covenant with them as a people.

Gabriel’s words to Daniel address the covenant relationship that had existed between Jesus and the Jews for almost 800 years. If Israel turned away from their idolatry and rebellion, they could still fulfill God’s purpose, for God had promised to restore them to their homeland.<sup>1</sup> God wanted Israel to know that their rescue from Babylon did not lessen their covenant responsibilities and it did not mean that all was well between them. Gabriel’s message addressed God’s concerns for Israel. He said that Israel would have the opportunity to anoint the Most Holy One of Israel and bring in everlasting righteousness during the probationary period of 490 years.

If the Jews had cooperated with the Lord, the history of the world would have been far different. If the Jews had fulfilled their calling, they could have “sealed up the vision and prophecy” so that the prophesied destruction would not have occurred. If-if-if...

Thus far, we have established three important dates. These are the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 BC, the baptism of Messiah in AD 27, and the death of Jesus in AD 30. The ministry and death of Jesus confirm the accuracy of 457 BC, and they also confirm the synchronism of the Jubilee Calendar. Therefore, we know the timing of the days within the week of years. Jesus died in the Wednesday year, the middle of the week. Because we understand the synchronism of the weekly cycles within the Jubilee Calendar, we can accurately time other important events.

When Gabriel told Daniel that 70 *sevens* were *cut off* for Israel, he spoke of God’s timing mechanism of Jubilee cycles. Understand that 490 literal years are exactly 10 Jubilees (49 x 10). The accuracy of this conclusion is

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1 Jeremiah 27:22

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confirmed when John baptized Messiah in AD 27, exactly 483 years (69 *sevens*) after Artaxerxes’ decree.

Remember, the second key to understanding Daniel 9 is that Christ’s death in AD 30 confirms the accuracy of 457 BC. Jesus died precisely on time in the middle of the 70th week and confirmed God’s covenant with man expressed in the Plan of Salvation.

There are some very strange views about the 70th week. For example, some teach that the 70th week contains a historical time period of 3.5 years, a gap of many centuries, and then a final 3.5 years. If this is true, the *middle* of the 70th week cannot be determined! We can only compute the middle of the 70th week because we know the beginning and ending dates. The middle year between AD 27 and 33 is AD 30. If the 70th week is not seven consecutive years, mathematically speaking, we cannot calculate the middle of the 70th week.

Others teach that there is a long gap of about 2,000 years between the 69th week and the 70th week. These disconnect the 70th week from the previous 69 weeks and move the 70th week to the end of time for one purpose. They believe the 70th week applies to the Jews living at the end of time. This is why the restoration of Israel as a state in 1948 stands so prominently in their eschatology. But, if the 70th week is disconnected from the previous 69 weeks, how can we be sure that the 68th week is consecutive with the 69th week, and so forth? Weekly cycles, whether literal or Jubilee time, need to follow in order. They cannot be disconnected from each other. If the 70th week is disconnected from the 69 weeks, then, what is the prophetic purpose of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and the following 69 weeks?

The 70 weeks of 490 years must stand together as one unit of consecutive time. The Bible does not support the idea that the 70th week is disconnected from the 69th week. Jesus gave ten Jubilee cycles or 70 *sevens* of 490 literal years to the Jewish nation to accomplish specific goals, and He confirmed the beginning of the 70th week of seven years in AD 27 with His baptism. He again confirmed the middle of the week by dying three and a half years later in AD 30.

So, we have applied three valuable keys. First, the operation of Jubilee cycles. Under this system, a day equals a year. This discovery allows us to

accurately calculate the timing of the birth, ministry, and death of Jesus. The second key is historical evidence. Jesus appeared right on time. Paul succinctly summarizes Daniel’s prophecy by saying, “**But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son.**”<sup>1</sup> God’s timing is perfect! This not only demonstrates the synchronism of the Jubilee Calendar and the day/year principle, but it also confirms our understanding of the prophecies. The third and last key that unlocks this portion of Daniel’s prophecy relates to the end of the 70th week—AD 33. This date is extremely important for God’s choice of the Jewish nation as His chosen people ended in this year.

### Prophetic Timing Review

- The Jews had a great deal of expectation in AD 27, the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. Many *anticipated* the Messiah would appear because they understood the timing of His appearance as predicted by Daniel.<sup>2</sup> Even the Samaritans knew that Messiah was coming. The woman at the well said: “**‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’**”<sup>3</sup> Mathematically, AD 27 is the 483rd year from Artaxerxes’ decree in 457 BC. Additionally, scholars today generally agree that Jesus would have been 30 years of age in AD 27 because Herod, the king who tried to kill Him, died in 4 BC.
- Jesus was baptized and anointed by His Father in AD 27 when He was about 30 years old. It was customary for a man to be 30 before he could serve Israel as a priest.<sup>4</sup>
- Elijah, as promised in Malachi 4:5, preceded Jesus’ baptism in AD 27. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah to *prepare the way of the Lord*.<sup>5</sup>
- Jesus, who gave this vision to Daniel 550 years before He was born, understood the timing and fulfillment of the prophecy, for He said at the beginning of His ministry on earth, “**The time has come.**”<sup>6</sup> Again, Jesus speaking after His baptism in Nazareth said,

1 Galatians 4:4

2 Luke 3:15

3 John 4:25

4 Numbers 4:3

5 Matthew 11:14

6 Mark 1:15

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**“The Spirit of the Lord is on me . . . to proclaim the *year* of the Lord’s favor.”<sup>1</sup>**

- Christ died precisely on time. Jesus, the Passover Lamb of God, died on the *very day* the ceremonial service had pointed forward to for centuries. The Passover Lamb was slain in the spring of the year, on the 14th day of the first month. Jesus died in the spring of the year, at the time of Passover. The spring of AD 30 is the middle year of the 70th week of seven years.

### **The Failure of Israel**

Even though the prophecies of Daniel 8 and 9 span several centuries and predict multiple events, their primary purpose is to provide a means to identify *when* the appointed time of the end arrives. Daniel 8 establishes a historical footing in the days of the Medo-Persian Empire. Artaxerxes was a Persian king, and he issued his decree in 457 BC. God, in His foreknowledge of coming events, chose this decree as an earthly marker for the Jews to begin their countdown to the appearing of Messiah. In addition, God chose this decree as the beginning point to date the cleansing of heaven’s sanctuary. The most impressive point about the prophetic dates of 457 BC and the cleansing of heaven’s sanctuary is that they center on the date of Christ’s ministry. Therefore, we can establish the chronology of Christ’s ministry in the judgment scene of Daniel 7.

### **The Covenant(s)**

The prophecy of Daniel 9 is complex. It will only fit together properly if we correctly understand many other elements outside the prophecy. We begin solving this puzzle by studying why God’s covenant with man is necessary. We often hear about the old and new covenants and many conclusions are not biblical. Although we will not currently explore the covenants in depth, we must understand two elements if we are going to comprehend the prophecy of Daniel 9.

First, the basic element of the covenant between God and man is this: “If you will be my people, I will be your God.” We find this thought many times throughout the Scriptures. The contents of the everlasting covenant are comprehensive and have always existed for God’s covenant is unchanging and everlasting. Man’s knowledge of the contents of the covenant has

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1 Luke 4:18–19

developed through the centuries because God has revealed more about the covenant as circumstances warranted.

God first revealed the essential elements of the everlasting covenant to Adam and Eve after they sinned. Then, God repeated and enlarged the covenant after the flood when He gave it to Noah. He further renewed and enlarged it with Abraham, Moses, and others. God’s everlasting covenant is just that: *everlasting*. It has always existed and will always exist. As time passes, God expands man’s understanding of His covenant concept so that we can understand our Maker more completely and even more, understand the properties of salvation. Knowledge is cumulative. This means that human beings can learn from earlier generations if they are willing. God’s covenant is both universal and everlasting. This means that it applies to everyone, everywhere, and it has never changed. The Plan of Salvation has never changed. Throughout history, men and women, boys and girls of all ages have *always* been saved by faith, and we are saved by faith today.<sup>1</sup>

The second element about God’s covenant is that He, at the time of Abraham, chose the descendants of Abraham to be trustees of the covenant. They were to carry the good news of the everlasting covenant to the ends of the world. God chose them because He loved Abraham. God knew that many people working together could accomplish more than a few people working separately. So, He chose Abraham’s family because Abraham was His friend. God wanted a nation of *Abraham-like* people. When Jesus was on earth, the Pharisees didn’t understand. They said to Him, **“Abraham is our father,’ they answered.**

**“If you were Abraham’s children,’ said Jesus, ‘then you would do what Abraham did.’”<sup>2</sup>**

Israel’s election as the trustees of the covenant was conditional.<sup>3</sup> Moses warned Israel many times that if they were unfaithful to their calling, God would reject them.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Covenant Explained**

God’s covenant is immutable or irrevocable. On the other hand, Israel could accept or reject their trusteeship. Their covenant as trustees was revo-

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1 Hebrews 3:7–19; 11:1–40, Ephesians 2:8–9

2 John 8:39

3 Deuteronomy 7–9

4 Deuteronomy 28

cable because they had to meet certain terms to be trustees of the gospel. The same is true of trusts today. Trustees must comply with legal requirements and the terms of the trust to remain a trustee.

God’s covenant includes a condition. It says: *If you will be my people, THEN, I will be your God.* In other words, no one is forced to accept the covenant. Instead, it is each person’s choice. The trustees of the covenant are responsible to make sure that everyone properly understands the everlasting covenant so everyone can decide for or against the covenant.

Israel violated God’s covenant and they did not live up to the terms to be trustees of the covenant. So, God sent them into Babylonian captivity.<sup>1</sup> From their captivity, God revealed He would give them one more chance to fulfill His purpose for them. This last chance was for a limited time of 490 years.

### The Newer Covenant

The everlasting covenant was renewed and enlarged when Jesus was on earth. However, it did not remove any of the previous elements of the covenant. Jesus said, **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets [the scripture]; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law [the scriptures] until everything is accomplished.”**<sup>2</sup>

Jesus revealed new truths about the covenant. After He ascended to heaven, He revealed even more truth to His disciples. One of the most exciting truths that He revealed is that He is ministering in heaven as man’s High Priest.

### The Covenant and Rules of Trusteeship

I need to share a very important distinction between the covenant and the rules of trusteeship. God’s everlasting covenant with man is unilateral. This means it is His covenant, and He created the terms. Man is in no position to negotiate an agreement with God. The Bible never calls God’s everlasting covenant *our* covenant. He always refers to it as *my* covenant.<sup>3</sup> The basic element of God’s covenant with man is extremely simple: *If you will be my people, I will be your God.*

1 2 Chronicles 36:16

2 Matthew 5:17–18

3 Genesis 17

The rules of trusteeship are vastly different and separate from the terms of the covenant. Most people mix the covenant and its terms together and then get very confused with the whole subject. So, this is an example that may be helpful: A wealthy couple learned they were going to have a child. So, they set up a trust for the child before it was born. When the child was 10 years old, both parents were killed in a plane crash. Since the child was a minor, he could not possess his inheritance. Therefore, according to the terms of the trust, the court appointed a trustee for the child until he reached maturity.

As you can see, the rules for the trustee are separate and distinct from the trust held for the child. The trust dictates the trustee should identify and follow certain requirements for the child and the trustee is responsible for completing those elements. Likewise, when God gave circumcision to Abraham, circumcision was not the everlasting covenant. Circumcision is not part of the everlasting covenant for the covenant says, “If you will be my people, I will be your God.” However, Abraham was willing to be a trustee of the gospel and God mandated to Abraham and his descendants that circumcision was a *token or sign* of this responsibility. Later, through Moses, God required His trustees to follow certain actions. He required a sanctuary system of ceremonial services so that in ages to come, people could investigate and understand the properties of His salvation. But, like the Jews, many Christians today still misunderstand the purpose of the ceremonial system. It never was part of the everlasting covenant. The ceremonial system was part of *their* responsibilities as trustees of His covenant. God wanted to teach Israel and later, the world about the Plan of Salvation.

Because Israel violated God’s covenant continually for centuries, His patience finally ran out. God used sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts on Israel to redeem them, but to no avail. Finally, God granted them 10 Jubilees of time, 490 years to *straighten up*. But, in the end, Israel lost their right to be trustees of the covenant. This is why circumcision came to mean nothing.<sup>1</sup>

When Jesus died on Calvary, the ceremonial services that pointed forward to the confirmation of Plan of Salvation were fulfilled. This is why they were nailed to the cross.<sup>2</sup> Because Israel failed to fulfill their responsibility as trustees, God’s election of literal Israel ended.

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1 Romans 2:28–29

2 Colossians 2:14–15; Galatians 4:9–10

Fortunately, the everlasting covenant remains unchanged. In fact, Jesus renewed and enlarged it again through the apostle Paul for all who would believe in His name. Jesus revealed to Paul that He is our High Priest. Jesus, who is our mediator in the heavenly sanctuary, has implemented a better, more complete covenant. Complete in the sense that human beings now understand more about God’s love. Complete in the sense that God will now reckon anyone a descendant of Abraham *if* they are willing to live by faith in Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

### 70 *Sevens* for Repentance

Daniel’s prophecy predicts the outcome of 490 years of probationary time for Israel. God, having foreknowledge, knew that Israel would not fulfill their trusteeship of the covenant. Keep in mind that God does not deal with us based on His foreknowledge; instead, He deals with us considering our circumstances. Because He is love, He does not use His foreknowledge to manipulate us for His benefit or our detriment.

Jesus knew Israel would forfeit its probationary time of 490 years, so He decreed that Jerusalem would again be destroyed and wars and desolations would continue until its destruction in AD 70. Even more, the *evil one* who causes wars and desolations would be allowed to continue his work until the end of time.

During the 70 *sevens*, Israel was to atone for their wicked ways as a nation by turning to the Lord in repentance. Repentance means the forsaking of sin! During their probationary time of 490 years (457 BC to AD 33), the Jewish nation was to *bring in everlasting righteousness* by measuring up to Jesus’ high calling as trustees of the gospel. The Jews were to develop the loving characteristics of their Messiah so that when He appeared, they would recognize Him by His character!

### 70 *Sevens*—A Measure of Forgiveness

The Jewish people knew the 70 *sevens* were probationary. They knew that their national apostasy led to the Babylonian captivity.<sup>2</sup> God had given them a final opportunity. In fact, Jesus used the 70 *sevens* mentioned in Daniel 9 as an expression of forbearance when Peter asked, “**Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?**”

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1 Galatians 3:29

2 Daniel 9:1–20

“Jesus answered, **‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven** [seventy times seven] **times.**”<sup>1</sup> Peter caught the meaning. He was to forgive his brother just as God had forgiven Israel (70 x 7).

The last year of the 70th *seven* occurred in AD 33. This year is important for it marked the last year of Jewish probation when the clock of mercy stopped. Frankly, Jewish interest in doing God’s will ceased long before AD 33. Jesus knew this so He pronounced divine sentence on 1,400 years of Jewish history when He proclaimed, **“Your house is left to you desolate.”**<sup>2</sup> The Jews were no longer trustees of the covenant, and no one can deny the historical record that the Jews rejected the Messiah.<sup>3</sup>

Like Sodom and Gomorrah, Jericho, and the wicked nations of Canaan, Israel passed the point of divine forbearance. God had forgiven them *seventy times seven*. Yet, the Jewish nation like the heathen nations before them, came to the end of divine mercy and Jesus dealt with them accordingly. Jesus had recounted His actions on the heathen and made it clear He would do the same to them saying, **“So I punished it** [the land of Canaan] **for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.”**<sup>4</sup> **“And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.”**<sup>5</sup>

### Israel Abandoned

A series of events transpired the following year showing that Jesus had terminated His covenant with the nation of Israel. Before considering the events, let’s review Israel’s choices.

- The Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior of the world. They could not see beyond the shadows of ceremonies and services. They preferred animal blood to faith in the blood of Messiah to represent the Plan of Salvation. What makes this so sad is that the sacrifices of animals never provided atonement for sin. Paul said, **“It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”**<sup>6</sup>

1 Matthew 18:21–22

2 Matthew 23:38

3 John 1:11

4 Leviticus 18:25

5 Leviticus 18:28

6 Hebrews 10:4

- The Jews failed to commit themselves to national repentance. They crucified Jesus and persecuted those who represented his work, because of their rebellion. Their religious pride blinded them in their transgressions. Jesus said to the Pharisees, **“You belong to your father, the Devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”**<sup>1</sup>
- Jesus, before His death knew the Jews would reject the covenant, saying, **“If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”**<sup>2</sup>

### The Straw that Broke the Camel’s Back

Perhaps, the most significant historical event recorded in the Bible during the last year of probationary time in AD 33 was the stoning of the Christian deacon, Stephen. The Sanhedrin (the Jewish supreme court) sentenced Stephen to death for preaching that “Jesus has risen from the dead.” The killing of Stephen initiated a calculated and open persecution of all Christians by the Jews.<sup>3</sup>

### New Trustees for the Gospel

In AD 34, Jesus demonstrated in heaven that He had terminated the Jews’ trusteeship. He gave Peter a vision about unclean animals. While in vision, Peter thought the command to kill and eat the unclean animals had dietary implications. Peter said, **“I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”**<sup>4</sup> But a voice from heaven said, **“Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”**<sup>5</sup> Three times this happened. Peter wondered about the meaning of the vision. While he thought about the meaning, the Holy Spirit said, **“Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.”**<sup>6</sup>

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1 John 8:44

2 Luke 16:31

3 Acts 7

4 Acts 10:14

5 Acts 10:15

6 Acts 10:19–20

The men invited Peter to the home of a Roman centurion, Cornelius, who was a Gentile, and the Jews considered him *unclean* as they regarded all Gentiles. But Cornelius was a God-fearing man who wanted to hear the gospel. Peter was very perplexed about visiting the home of a Gentile (which was unlawful for a Jew to enter), yet the Holy Spirit had said, “Go!”

When he arrived at Cornelius’ home, Peter said, **“You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?”**<sup>1</sup> Peter now began to understand the vision. He dimly realized that Christians now had the commission to represent God on earth—not the Jews.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps Jesus’ strongest response to Israel’s final rejection was to take one of Israel’s brightest and best and *make* a Christian out of him. The conversion of pharisee Saul to apostle Paul, and his life of dedication and service is a story only excelled in the Bible by the life of Jesus. Saul, the Jewish persecutor, became Paul, the persecuted Christian, an apostle sent specifically to the Gentiles. Jesus told Ananias concerning Saul, **“This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”**<sup>3</sup>

Since Israel had failed as trustees of His covenant, Jesus raised up a new group of trustees, people called *Christians*. Jesus set out to accomplish through the Christian Church what the Jews had failed to do. He gave the Christians a renewed and expanded covenant, a bold faith, an understanding of His character, and most of all, a theology based on His life, death, resurrection, and priestly ministry. Paul became a brilliant and energetic champion of the cross.

### **Will the Jews Change?**

Many people today mistakenly believe the Jews are still God’s chosen people. However, God rejected them as trustees of His covenant in AD 33

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1 Acts 10:28–29

2 Acts 10; Matthew 28; Acts 15

3 Acts 9:15–16

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when they rejected Jesus. Paul understood this very well. He told the Romans, **“A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.”**<sup>1</sup> Paul told the Galatians, **“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”**<sup>2</sup>

Jesus, speaking as Lord, transferred the trusteeship of the gospel to His disciples saying, **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**<sup>3</sup> **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**<sup>4</sup>

Paul knew that Israel as a nation had been cut off from God’s covenant. Paul sincerely hoped that some of its people would repent and find God’s favor again. He said, **“And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.”**<sup>5</sup>

I believe God has a very important reason for allowing Israel to once again become a nation in these last days. Jesus wants the world to observe the character and nature of a religious people who refuse to accept Him as their Savior. We can watch their attitudes and conduct toward their neighbors and see what happens when trustees of His covenant fail to live up to its terms.

### **Three Keys Confirm Historical Footing**

Now we have the keys that work together to unlock the longest time prophecy in the Bible. Note that the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 BC meshes

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1 Romans 2:28–29

2 Galatians 3:28–29

3 Acts 1:8

4 Matthew 28:19–20

5 Romans 11:23

with the dates of three events. First, Jesus began His ministry 69 weeks after the decree (AD 27). Second, Jesus died in the middle of the 70th week (AD 30). Finally, Israel lost their position as trustees of the gospel at the end of the 70 *sevens* (AD 33). The destruction of the city and the temple also mentioned in the prophecy<sup>1</sup> occurred in AD 70. Rome razed Jerusalem in that siege. What a sad ending to such a glorious beginning.

### The Appointed Time of the End

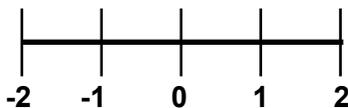
Daniel’s visions of Daniel 8 and 9 were comprehensive. The Bible is a storehouse of treasures and those who study prophecy study the deep things of God. Now that we have *nailed* down the accuracy of 457 BC, we can be certain of the origin and purpose of the 2,300 days. They ended in 1844.

### The Cleansing of the Sanctuary

We must address two topics when we read about the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14, timing and meaning. We have previously considered that the beginning of the 2,300 day/year prophecy began in 457 BC. If we add 2,300 years to the 457 BC, the result is AD 1844. However, this requires some explanation.

$$\begin{array}{r} 2,300 \\ - 457 \\ \hline 1,843 \end{array}$$

From mathematics alone, we note the date would be 1843. This is because math uses a number scale that includes a zero value. Notice the following number line:



You will notice that two years (or two spaces) exist between -1 and 1, for this scale moves from -1 to 0 to 1. The Gregorian (and subsequent Julian) calendars left out a “0” year when dating the time of Christ’s birth. So, the years 0 BC or AD 0 did not exist. Any periods of time that span BC to AD must have an additional year added to be mathematically correct. We must add one year to 1843 which equals 1844.

<sup>1</sup> Daniel 9:26

What does the Bible mean when it says that the sanctuary will be re-consecrated or cleansed after 2,300 evenings and mornings?

The sanctuary referred to in this part of the vision is located in heaven, where Jesus now serves as our High Priest. Paul said, **“We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.”**<sup>1</sup> Remember, this vision focused on the *appointed time of the end* and the time frame connects to the judgment scenes found in Daniel 7:9–10. As we learn more from this prophecy, we will discover that the most important events concerning the destiny of the human race occur in the heavenly sanctuary and not on earth.

Even though the Jews were able to restore their temple due to Artaxerxes’ decree, the Romans destroyed it again in AD 70 because the Jews forfeited their privilege of being God’s chosen nation at the end of the 70th week. Ironically, the rebuilt temple of the Jews was not a house of prayer for all people. It does not matter if the Jewish temple will be rebuilt again. The Jews are no longer God’s chosen servants. So, the vision of the 2,300 days is connected to the services of Jesus, the High Priest for us, serving in the only temple that matters—the heavenly sanctuary.

### The Sanctuary Restored

The Christian faith is built on Jesus’ achievement. He came to earth and was tempted beyond anything humans will ever face, yet He lived a sinless life and willingly died at the hands of His own people to pay the penalty for sin. Jesus returned to heaven and, at the right time, sat down at the right hand of the Father to intercede for humanity through the merits of His blood. Christ’s work in heaven from His ascension to 1844 was like a priest serving in the earthly sanctuary.

Since the Old Testament sanctuary, built in the wilderness, was a representation of the one in heaven, the earthly services represented or *shadowed* processes of services occurring in heaven! Paul emphasized this point when talking about the role of priests, **“They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: ‘See to it that you make everything**

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1 Hebrews 8:1–2

**according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”<sup>1</sup>**

Since the Jews failed to accomplish their responsibilities during the probationary time period of the *70 sevens*, they never fulfilled the *intended* purpose of the rebuilt temple and restored services. Consequently, Jesus said *your temple is left desolate*. So, what Jesus intended to do in the earthly temple has to be completed in the heavenly one!

When 1844 arrived, Jesus began a very special work as our High Priest to reconsecrate or restore the sanctuary process. This is not to say that Jesus wasn’t busy with heavenly business from His ascension in AD 30 to 1844. Jesus was intimately involved with the trustees of the gospel, the Christian church. Jesus also showed Daniel events that would develop during the *times of the Gentiles*. These will be investigated in the next chapter.

Jesus placed a long span of time between Daniel’s day and the *appointed time of the end*. We know that the appointed time of the end began in 1798, and 1844 collaborates to prove we are living in the final phase of Christ’s ministry in heaven. The longest time prophecy in the Bible has been fulfilled—all 2,300 years. Since Jesus personally confirmed the accuracy of the 70-weeks prophecy (beginning in 457 BC) with His baptism and death, 1844 is just as certain too, for both time periods began at the *same* time. We shall soon see that 1844 figures prominently in Revelation’s story.

### Summary

Daniel 7, 8, and 9 are inseparably linked to show chronologically when the *appointed time of the end* arrives. The accuracy of 1798 and 1844 is as certain. The former date is historically confirmed by events on earth. The latter date is confirmed by works of Jesus. The resulting harmony between the 1,260 years, the *70 sevens*, and the 2,300 years is both scriptural and historical.

Isn’t it interesting that what the Jews forfeited, the Christians inherited? In the next chapter, we will learn about prophetic events that took place after 1844. We will also see that history repeats itself!

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1 Hebrews 8:5



# The Day of Judgment and Destiny of the Dead

Thus far we've studied the prophetic mechanism that chronologically reaches to 1844. Why is 1844 so important? What does the Bible mean when it says "**then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated**"? Even though many people do not appreciate the prophetic importance of 1844, this will change when God breaks His silence with the affairs of man. Overnight, interest in this subject will increase from obscurity to intensity because the seven seals of Revelation are directly related to this time! As we will see, God has ordained that the living will know that the *appointed time for the end* of the world has come! The longest time prophecy in the Bible of 2,300 years is built solidly on four historical moments confirmed in Scripture.

1. The decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem occurred in the Jubilee year of 457 BC. (Ezra 7)
2. At the beginning of the 70th week (483 years after the decree to rebuild) Jesus was baptized and anointed by the Holy Spirit in AD 27. (Luke 3)
3. Jesus, the Passover Lamb, was crucified in the middle of the week, AD 30, at the time of the annual Passover feast. (John 19)
4. Probationary time for the Jews as a nation ended in AD 33 when the privilege of representing God was transferred to the Christians. (Acts 7–10)

So according to Daniel 8:14, the reconsecration of the heavenly sanctuary began 2,300 years after the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. The restoration of the heavenly sanctuary is very similar to the ancient Day of Atonement service conducted in the wilderness sanctuary.

### Another Look at Daniel 7

We need to review Daniel 7 because we are looking for additional information about 1844. Daniel's four beasts, discussed in Chapter 6, parallel the same kingdoms that Nebuchadnezzar saw. These were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Even though history removes any doubt about the identity and chronological progression of these kingdoms, Daniel 7 reveals more than the rise and fall of kingdoms. Notice the sequence of these kingdoms.

- |                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Lion          | 5. Ten horns             |
| 2. Bear          | 6. Little horn           |
| 3. Leopard       | 7. Judgment scene        |
| 4. Monster beast | 8. Beasts burned by fire |

Two verses in Daniel 7 connect the beginning of the judgment scene with the ending of the little horn. **“As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.”**<sup>1</sup>

Notice the little horn waged war against the saints *until* the Ancient of Days *came* and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints. Remember, the little horn's period of persecution ended after 1,260 years, in 1798. The Ancient of Days *came* to the scene described in Daniel 7 and pronounced judgment, a temporary restraining order, against the little horn at that time, and the persecution ended. The 1,260 years connect to the judgment against the little horn, so 1798 marks the date of the *temporary restraining order*. I call it a temporary restraining order because the little horn will begin persecuting the saints again at the very end of time. Revelation 13:3 states the wound inflicted upon the little horn will be healed, and verse 7 says that it will war against the saints. Daniel 7:21–22, in a veiled way, alluded to this resumption of persecution by saying, **“And the time came when they possessed the kingdom.”** The saints will not possess the kingdom until Jesus comes. So, the little horn quit persecuting the saints in 1798 by divine decree from heaven. However, the little horn will begin its persecution again at the time of the end. Jesus himself will then appear and end the persecution of His saints forever.

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1 Daniel 7:21–22

## The Judgment Scene

The Bible offers enough information to connect 1798 with the judgment scene of Daniel 7, but what does the judgment scene have to do with 1844 and the cleansing of the sanctuary?

Daniel 7 contains an important key that unlocks the significance of 1844. **“As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.”**<sup>1</sup>

Daniel saw a judgment scene occurring in heaven which was the judgment of mankind. This judgment scene included the following events.

1. Thrones (plural) were put in place or arranged. Heaven was made ready for a great event.
2. The Ancient of Days, the Father, presides. His appearance is greater than the brightness of the sun. His throne (compared to the other thrones) is so bright that it appears to be on fire. The glowing angels that encircle Him appear to Daniel as wheels of fire.
3. This is no ordinary convention in heaven. Billions of angels throughout the universe have been summoned to this special occasion.
4. The Father takes His seat. The court was seated. And the books of record were opened. But the scene did not end with these verses. Daniel said, **“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”**<sup>2</sup>
5. In this vast assembly of angels, Daniel saw a being that looked very different than the heavenly host that looked like a *son of man*. Billions of angels were gathered in this heavenly courtroom and at center stage

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1 Daniel 7:9–10

2 Daniel 7:13–14

stood a being that looked like a member of the human race. This *son of man* could only be Jesus.

6. Jesus was taken before the Ancient of Days by a retinue of holy angels.
7. As Daniel watched, Jesus received authority, glory, and sovereign power.
8. Daniel concluded his description of the vision writing that Jesus is ultimately worshiped by everyone in heaven and on earth and His kingdom will never pass away or be destroyed. Contrast this with the four beasts that rise and fall.

Daniel was permitted to see the services that mark the beginning of the judgment of the human race! Bible authors spoke about a future judgment day.

1. **“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”<sup>1</sup>**
2. **“For he [the Father] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.”<sup>2</sup>**
3. **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us.”<sup>3</sup>**
4. Peter understood that the judgment day would be future: **“The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.”<sup>4</sup>**
5. Paul anticipated the judgment day: **“This will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup>**
6. Jesus told the Pharisees that the great judgment day was in the future: **“The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to**

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1 Ecclesiastes 12:14

2 Acts 17:31

3 2 Corinthians 5:10

4 2 Peter 2:9

5 Romans 2:16

**Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.”<sup>1</sup>**

7. Jesus told the Jews that He would someday judge them: **“The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”<sup>2</sup>**

That a judgment day is prophesied in the Bible is beyond dispute, but the big question is when does Jesus determine the eternal destiny of each person?

### **The Day of Atonement**

Part of the answer to this question is found in the sanctuary service of the Old Testament. Remember, Israel faced a judgment day countdown each year. According to the Mishna, a collection of Jewish writings, the judgment of Israel began on the first day of the seventh month with the Feast of Trumpets. The judgment ended on the 10th day with the Day of Atonement. Today, the 10th day of the seventh religious month is called *Yom Kippur* which literally means, day of judgment.

Chapter 5 explained the Day of Atonement and what it meant to the Jews. The Feast of Trumpets began on the first day of the seventh month with trumpets sounding to warn Israel that probation or mercy was closing. Each person was to search his heart and make all wrongs right before the 10th day. Individuals had to transfer all their sins to the sanctuary *before* the 10th day of the seventh month. If a sinner failed to transfer his sins to the sanctuary, he would bear the penalty for his own sins.

The Jews understood the Day of Atonement was the end of the yearly judgment process. By the evening of the ninth day, they had to confess all their sins and transfer them to the sanctuary via the shed blood of an animal so that all sins for that year could be disposed of. On the morning of the 10th day, the high priest cleansed the sanctuary of all accumulated sins. Thus, the Day of Atonement was the most significant day in Jewish ceremonies. Jesus told Moses, **“On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work—whether native-born or a foreigner residing among you—because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you.**

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1 Matthew 12:41–42

2 John 5:22–23

**Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins. It is a day of sabbath rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance.”<sup>1</sup>**

### **The Courtroom Scene**

Daniel saw a courtroom setting with the Ancient of Days presiding and the books of record were opened. The record books contain every motive, deed, and thought of everyone who has ever lived. Jesus will examine each person who has lived on earth and determine their ultimate destiny of eternal life or eternal death. All heaven attends this solemn meeting. Daniel mentions that ten thousand times ten thousand angels are present. Every angel anxiously watches as Jesus reviews each record and arrives at a decision that will last for eternity. It is an awesome occasion!

Many people are surprised to discover that John 5:22 states Jesus makes the eternal decision for each person. The Father has granted Jesus the position of both *advocate and judge*. This is only fair; for Jesus has walked where we walk. He has suffered more than we suffer, and He was tempted more than we are tempted.<sup>2</sup> We can understand the beauty of this point by comparing our judicial system with heaven’s judicial system. In our judicial system, we are judged by our peers. In other words, a person is judged by a jury of people having the same background as the accused. Similarly, the people of earth are judged in heaven by one like us, a *son of man*. Daniel saw Jesus approach the Father and receive authority and sovereign power for this judgment. Sovereign power means unlimited power.

The courtroom scene of Daniel 7:9–10 began in 1798 when Jesus was found worthy to receive the book sealed with seven seals in 1798 and Jesus began opening the seals.<sup>3</sup> I will give a short explanation about how Jesus opened the third seal in 1844, which marks the beginning of the judgment of man. When Jesus began His earthly ministry, one of the first things He did was to cleanse the earthly temple.<sup>4</sup> After He cleansed the temple, the Pharisees taunted Him asking how He could reconstruct the temple in three days since it had taken 46 years to build.<sup>5</sup> Here is a parallel. Just as it

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1 Leviticus 16:29–31

2 Hebrews 4:15

3 Revelation 6:1

4 John 2

5 John 2:20

took 46 years to build the temple that Jesus cleansed on earth, it took 46 years (1798–1844) to set the stage on earth so that people could understand that Jesus was beginning His high priestly ministry in heaven. The first two seals of Revelation 6 have to do with setting earth's stage so that people can understand the event occurring during the third seal.

### Putting the Pieces Together

If we combine information from Daniel 7, and Daniel 8 and 9, along with information about the Day of Atonement and the seven texts on the day of judgment, we discover four wonderful points:

1. The judgment of human beings occurs in heaven after four world empires have risen and fallen and the little horn power has waged war on the saints for 1,260 years.
2. Jesus is the judge. He is granted authority, glory, and sovereign power to conduct this process.
3. The restoration or cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary began at the end of the 2,300 years in 1844. The courtroom scene has to do with the judgment of human beings. It is the final event in the heavenly sanctuary. The service began in 1798 and the opening of the books in 1844 indicates that the time to review the records of each person has come!
4. The Old Testament Day of Atonement provides valuable information that helps us understand what the cleansing of the *true* sanctuary in heaven means.

### Repetition and Enlargement

Understand that Daniel 7, like Daniel 2, is a broad, sweeping prophecy. All details regarding the little horn power are not included in Daniel 7. The Bible uses a process of repetition and enlargement to unfold the prophecies. Daniel 7 enlarges the details of Daniel 2. Likewise, Daniel 8 expands some of the details of Daniel 7, and we will see that the entire book of Revelation enlarges on Daniel 8–12. As we study these prophecies, we will learn intriguing elements that specifically relate to our day.

### The Judgment Process Examined

What happens in the judgment process? How are we judged? Solomon wrote, **“Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of mankind. For God will bring**

**every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”<sup>1</sup>**

In 1844, Jesus began cleansing the sanctuary in heaven. The recorded sins of people on earth had defiled the heavenly sanctuary so that it needed cleansing. Remember, the sins of Israel were *recorded* on the horns of the altars each day so that it had to be cleansed each year on the Day of Atonement. So, the sins of each person are accurately recorded in heaven’s sanctuary. Those who live up to all the knowledge they have are given Christ’s righteousness. This is the mystery of God! This is how the Plan of Salvation can save the most vile offender. In 1844, Jesus began reviewing the books of record. Jesus conducts this process before the host of angels so that nothing is hidden. He thoroughly investigates all aspects of each person’s life who lived on earth. Quite likely, He began this process with the first to die—Abel.

As Jesus proceeds through the books of record, He makes an irrevocable decision about each person regarding eternal life or death. Individuals listed in the books of record who rejected the promptings of the Holy Spirit and refused to receive salvation will be lost. They stand condemned as *uncovered* sinners before the Father. They have refused to live by faith and to heed the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Understand that Jesus intimately investigates every aspect of a person’s life to ensure that a fair decision is made. Jesus considers what each person knew, what each person had the opportunity to know, and what each person did with what he knew or believed. He also considers where each person came from, their time and place, how they treated others, and many, many other factors. This is a solemn scene of eternal importance. Millions of reverent angels are in attendance.

Because books of record are used in heaven’s court scene, we can conclude that the judgment began with the dead. At the printing of this book, this process has been going on in heaven for nearly two centuries. Soon, the judgment of the living will begin. The work in heaven will turn from the books of records to the lives of the living. Books of record will not be necessary for the living—they will face a test. It will be pass or fail, and each person will determine his own fate.

We have chronologically identified the Day of Judgment that Daniel described. The service began in 1798 and the judgment of the dead began

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1 Ecclesiastes 12:13–14

in 1844. The courtroom is in heaven. The wilderness Day of Atonement pointed forward to the heavenly Day of Atonement. Since that time, Jesus, the judge of mankind, has been involved with determining the eternal destiny of each person as He reviews the books of record. The books reveal the choices that each person has made. The record books contain what the person knew at the time, what they did and why. Everything is exposed in the judgment process.

At the second coming, those who have been granted eternal life will rise in the first resurrection. Later, those who have done evil will rise to meet their Maker and receive their due reward at the end of the millennium.

### **A New Problem Arises**

If the judgment of the dead, that is, the process of determining the eternal destiny of the dead began in 1844, how can dead people be living in heaven or hell prior to 1844?

Many people believe that a person is sentenced to eternal life or eternal burning in hell when they die. Naturally, this belief requires that God makes the eternal judgment at the time of death. However, the Bible does not teach this about the judgment of mankind. The Bible clearly says that God has appointed a certain time to judge the world. Even more, no one could be judged until Jesus had first lived as a human being and been tempted in all points as we have been.<sup>1</sup> Further, when Jesus returns at the second coming, He brings His reward with Him indicating that the judgment process is completed! **“Look I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.”**<sup>2</sup>

### **Does God Burn Sinners for Eternity?**

Through the centuries, Satan has deceived millions of people with the concept that when a person dies, he goes straight to heaven or hell. Many Christians accept this idea today and aren't particularly bothered by it. After all, no one has seen a large pit of fire where loved ones are burning and writhing in pain. Only in the past century has this doctrine lost most of its terror. In Protestantism today, almost everyone goes to heaven. When was the last time you heard a funeral officiant saying someone is in hell?

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1 Acts 17:31

2 Revelation 22:12

The doctrine of an eternally burning hell has a terrible history. The Roman Church originally used this teaching to control the masses. The people who lived during the Dark Ages didn't have Bibles, so they lived in constant fear and had many superstitions about God. For example, a sneeze was believed to be a demon attempting to snatch away one's breath. Thus, the quick response, "Bless you," was offered since last rites were necessary for salvation. The Roman clerics preyed on the superstitious fears of the people as one way to raise money. Families could both buy deceased loved ones out of the torment of purgatory and purchase eternal life for themselves, regardless of their behavior. The wealthier the family, the higher the price, of course. In fact, the construction of St. Peter's Basilica was financed entirely from the sale of indulgences in the 15th and 16th centuries. Total sales reportedly reached an equivalent of \$107 million in those days. Indulgences were popular because they were *legal documents* from the pope granting eternal life without first going to purgatory.

Most Protestants still hold to the teaching of the immortality of the soul. There are several problems with the idea that an individual goes to heaven or hell at death.

1. The Bible does not say that burning forever in hellfire is the penalty for sin. On the contrary, the Bible says, "**The wages of sin is death.**"<sup>1</sup>
2. If burning in hell forever were the penalty for sin, then Jesus could not have possibly paid the penalty for sin by dying on Calvary, for He was resurrected on the third day. Conversely, one could argue, "Jesus didn't remain dead for eternity either." This is true. But the wages of sin is death and once the second death is experienced, the penalty is paid. Jesus was resurrected to life forever because He was sinless.
3. Going to heaven or hell at the time of death presupposes an immediate judgment decision for that individual. From Daniel 7 and 8, we learned that the judgment did not begin until 1844. Decisions for eternal life or death were not made before that time.
4. If people go to heaven or hell immediately at death, there would be no purpose for the resurrection. Notice that the wicked and the righteous are both resurrected. Paul said, "**And I have the same hope in God**

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1 Romans 6:23

**as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”<sup>1</sup>**

Some suggest the purpose of the resurrection is to come back and get the earthly body. According to Paul, we won't be able to use the earthly body which is perishable. **“I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. . . . The dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.”<sup>2</sup>**

5. Jesus predicted two resurrections. **“For a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live [see #6], and those who have done evil will rise [for the final judgment at the end of the 1,000 years] to be condemned.”<sup>3</sup>** If people are already burning in hell, why would they be resurrected? Wouldn't that be a case of being condemned before being judged guilty?
6. John saw the redeemed awake from death at the second coming. He says, **“They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”<sup>4</sup>**

### **Death is Like Sleep**

Five times in the New Testament, death is called sleep. Sleep is simply a condition of unconsciousness. Solomon says, **“For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.”<sup>5</sup>**

King David knew the saints weren't in heaven praising God. He wrote, **“Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave?”<sup>6</sup>** **“It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to**

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1 Acts 24:15

2 1 Corinthians 15:50, 52–53

3 John 5:28–29

4 Revelation 20:4

5 Ecclesiastes 9:5–6

6 Psalm 6:5

the place of silence.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus said to His disciples concerning Lazarus, “**Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.**’

“His disciples replied ‘Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.’

“Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead.’”<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus resurrected Lazarus from death, Lazarus gave no report of stoking fires in hell or dancing in heaven. He’d been sleeping and thus unconscious of anything going on!

In our next lesson, we’ll look at the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Does it prove people are burning in hell?

### Is There Life in Death?

From Daniel, we have learned Jesus began His judgment of humans in 1844. The great courtroom scene began with the Ancient of Days taking His seat in 1798. Then, the books of records were opened in 1844 and a review of each person who had died commenced. The fundamental issue of what happens to a person when he dies must be addressed because death, judgment, and reward are all connected. The truth on this subject is very important, for it is directly connected to the climactic story of Revelation.

Many Eastern Mystic religions believe in the transmigration of the soul. The transmigration concept means that the soul was once a lower form of life before entering the human being, and at death life moves on to a higher or lower form depending on how one lived in this life. Many Christians have a theology that parallels this concept. The basic difference between Christians and those believing in the transmigration of the soul is that Christians believe life *begins* with conception in the womb. On the other hand, many Christians and Eastern Mystic religions believe the soul is immortal and thus not subject to death. Both ideas are contrary to Scripture. The soul does die! God says, “**The soul who sins will die.**”<sup>3</sup> If the soul is immortal, when is immortality bestowed upon it?

### When Does Life Begin?

The Bible tells us, “**Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of**

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1 Psalm 115:17

2 John 11:11–14

3 Ezekiel 18:4, NASB

**the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”<sup>1</sup>**

A living being is a combination of two elements: the body and the breath (power) of life. Separate these two elements, and you don't have a living being! Life may be thought of as light. Connect a light bulb with electricity and there is light. Separate the electricity from the bulb and there is no light.

Some people believe that when a person dies, the spirit (the soul) returns to God. Solomon said, **“Remember him [our Creator]—before the silver cord is severed, and the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”<sup>2</sup>** From this text, it is clear that the spirit returns to God who gave it. This is true of *both* the righteous and the wicked. The word translated spirit in Ecclesiastes 12:6–7 is the identical word used for breath in Job 27:3–4. **“As long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not say anything wicked.”** So, what returns to God is the power to live.

God grants breath to all who live. This is true of animals and man. Of Noah's flood it is said, **“Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died.”<sup>3</sup>**

The Greek and Hebrew words for spirit mean wind or breath. The Hebrew word, “ruach” and the Greek word, “pneuma” do not refer to some intelligent entity free of the body. Rather, these words simply apply to the breath of life. The word for breath is often translated spirit and vice versa. A soul does not exist when the spirit or breath is separated from the body. When breath and a body are brought together, the result is a soul. Our example of the light bulb demonstrated this. When power is applied to the bulb we have light. When the power is disconnected, there is no light. In the same way, when the breath of life is connected to a body, we have a living soul—whether animal or man. When the breath of life is taken from the body, there is no soul.

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1 Genesis 2:7

2 Ecclesiastes 12:6–7

3 Genesis 7:21–22

The Hebrew word for soul is “nephesh” and the Greek word is “psuche.” Both of these words mean or imply that a living being is a soul! Solomon wrote, **“Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; humans have no advantage over animals.”**<sup>1</sup>

### More Bible Writers Agree

God drove Adam and Eve out of their Eden home so that they could not eat from the Tree of Life and live forever. After Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus said, **“The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”**<sup>2</sup> God removed Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden because they were condemned to die. The Bible says that the ability to exist forever comes only through Jesus. John says, **“Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”**<sup>3</sup>

In Paul’s day, many early Christians were sorrowful, thinking there was no resurrection or life in the hereafter. To set the matter straight, Paul wrote, **“According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”**<sup>4</sup> Paul did not comfort those grieving for their deceased friends with the notion their friends were in heaven. Instead, he pointed them forward to the resurrection.

### The Devil Started the Deception

The Devil brought confusion to this point in the very beginning. Satan told Eve she wouldn’t die if she disobeyed God. Today, Satan has twisted the meaning of death 180 degrees so that many people believe that death means life. King David knew the dead weren’t in heaven. He praised the

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1 Ecclesiastes 3:19

2 Genesis 3:22

3 1 John 5:12

4 1 Thessalonians 4:15–18

Lord saying, **“It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to the place of silence; it is we who extol the Lord.”**<sup>1</sup>

The apostle Peter also knew the dead weren't in heaven praising the Lord. In his famous sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he quoted references from the Old Testament when King David had prophesied about the coming Messiah. Then, Peter concluded by saying that David was not in heaven. **“Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.”**<sup>2</sup> **“For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”**<sup>3</sup>

King David knew the dead were not in heaven playing a harp and singing praises to God. He wrote, **“Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you [God] from the grave?”**<sup>4</sup> Solomon understood death just like his father, David. He wrote, **“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.”**<sup>5</sup>

Daniel saw the great resurrection at the end of time when He stated that **“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”**<sup>6</sup>

There is consistent harmony throughout the Bible on the nature of death. Man is mortal. Death is like sleep. The dead simply remain in a state of unconsciousness. The dead are dead! They rest from their labors until the resurrection morning.

I once visited with a man who claimed to have died on the operating table for five minutes. He reported that he had an out-of-body experience in bright lights. Does a hallucinogenic experience validate or invalidate the Scriptures?

### **King Saul Consulted an Unhappy Medium**

Jesus told the Israelites to have nothing to do with mediums or spiritists. These are people who practice and promote communication with the

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1 Psalm 115:17–18

2 Acts 2:29

3 Acts 2:34–35

4 Psalm 6:5

5 Ecclesiastes 9:10

6 Daniel 12:2

dead. Jesus said, **“Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them.”**<sup>1</sup> **“A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads.”**<sup>2</sup>

Saul, the first king of Israel was rebellious and had repeatedly failed to obey the Lord. One day God sent the prophet Samuel to Saul telling him the kingdom would be taken from him and given to another. Saul remembered these words. The promised *other* was a young shepherd boy named David.

Later, after Samuel died, the Philistines assembled at Shunem to fight the Israelites. When Saul saw the size of their army, he became afraid, and terror filled his heart. The Bible tells the rest of the story, **“He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. Saul then said to his attendants, ‘Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her.’**

**“‘There is one in Endor,’ they said.**

**“So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. ‘Consult a spirit for me,’ he said, ‘and bring up for me the one I name.’**

**“But the woman said to him, ‘Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?’**

**“Saul swore to her by the Lord, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, you will not be punished for this.’**

**“Then the woman asked, ‘Whom shall I bring up for you?’**

**“‘Bring up Samuel,’ he said.**

**“When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out of the top of her voice to Saul and said, ‘Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!’**

**“The king said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid. What do you see?’**

**“The woman said, ‘I see a spirit coming up out of the ground.’**

**“‘What does he look like?’ he asked.**

**“‘An old man wearing a robe is coming up,’ she said.**

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1 Leviticus 19:31

2 Leviticus 20:27

“Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.

“Samuel said to Saul, ‘Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?’

“‘I am in great distress,’ Saul said. ‘The Philistines are fighting against me and God has departed from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do.’

“Samuel said, ‘Why do you consult me, now that the Lord has departed from you and become your enemy? The Lord has done what he predicted through me. The Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors—to David. Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the Lord has done this to you today. The Lord will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The Lord will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.’

“Immediately, Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of Samuel’s words.”<sup>1</sup>

This story illustrates three important points about man’s state at death.

1. The Lord had turned His back on Saul and refused to answer him through prophets or dreams. Neither did the Lord answer Saul through the medium of Endor. In his desperation, Saul sought out the Devil. What he saw and heard was a demon in the form of Samuel, the deceased prophet.
2. Notice that Satan’s remarks were quite accurate about Saul’s condition. Even though Satan doesn’t precisely know the future (he isn’t omniscient), he is very smart. He had carefully studied Saul and in the medium’s house, he succeeded in destroying whatever courage the abandoned king may have had.
3. Satan gave Saul the idea that Samuel was in the grave (not in heaven or in hell) and that Saul would soon join Samuel in death.

The doctrine that deceased people are in heaven or hell opens the door to communication with spirits. The Bible clearly shows that such communication is not with angelic beings but with demons.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 28:6–20

### Jesus—Now Alive Forever and Ever

In Revelation, Jesus told John, **“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades [the grave].”**<sup>1</sup> Jesus holds the keys to death and the grave. He has the power of life within himself! Jesus will use the key of life and open the graves of all the righteous at the resurrection during the second coming. Paul said, **“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”**<sup>2</sup>

### Problem Texts

A few Bible texts can be particularly confusing on the matter of death. Let's examine a few in 1 Peter.

**“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, [a] he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.”**<sup>3</sup>

Some interpret this text to mean that Jesus, during the time He was dead, went to a prison where evil people had been held since the flood and preached forgiveness to them.

This view presents insurmountable questions. For example, after a person is once consigned to hell, can he be set free? The Roman Church taught for centuries just a contribution could free another person from hell. However, those holding this view have not considered the flip side of the coin. Suppose you were in heaven and for a fee, someone who didn't like you could send you to hell. As you see, other people's actions cannot determine or control your eternal destiny, whether in heaven or hell.

Also consider this. There would be no point for Jesus to preach forgiveness to those who had been burning in hell for 2,000 years. After two

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1 Revelation 1:17–18

2 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17

3 1 Peter 3:18–20

millennia, could they suddenly repent and go to heaven? Jesus preaching repentance to someone burning in hell for 2,000 years is anticlimactic, isn't it? How persuasive would Jesus (or anyone for that matter) have to be to persuade those burning in hell for 2,000 years that they need to repent? The whole idea is absurd. The Bible teaches that we have only one chance for salvation during this life.<sup>1</sup>

Peter, in our problem text, was making the point that Jesus was put to death in the body and made alive by the Spirit of God. By this *same Spirit*, Jesus patiently waited for 120 years in the days of Noah to save anyone who would get on board.<sup>2</sup> Then Peter said, **“For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.”**<sup>3</sup> In other words, Peter said the gospel is preached to those who are now dead to spiritual things (the Jews) so they can see their need to live in harmony with the Spirit and receive life and God's approval. When we understand the true meaning of 1 Peter 3, it does not conflict with other scriptures about death. There is harmony in the sum of the parts!

### **The Rich Man and Lazarus**

No parable has caused more discussion regarding death than this one. Luke records the story, **“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.**

**“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’**

**“But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between**

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1 Hebrews 4:7

2 Genesis 6:1–8

3 1 Peter 4:6

us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’

“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’

“‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”<sup>1</sup>

A logical reader would likely have several questions.

- Assuming there are people in heaven and hell, could they really carry on a conversation?
- Could people in heaven give water to those in hell?
- Do the rich go to hell and the poor go to heaven?

Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived shortly after Christ, tells us this story was in vogue at the time of Christ. It is a tale of theological contrasts within Judaism. For example, the Sadducees rejected the idea of a resurrection believing that one went straight to their eternal reward at death while the Pharisees believed in the resurrection.<sup>2</sup> The Pharisees believed God had blessed a wealthy person for his righteousness while a poor person was punished for some evil, either hidden or hereditary.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus took Luke’s well-known tale of many opposites and tied it to some very important points—none associated with burning in hell or dancing in heaven.

1. The Jews were wealthy. God had chosen them as a special people and gave them His richest blessings. He had enlightened them with truth.
2. The poor Gentiles did not have the same opportunities as the Jews. But circumstances change. The Jews would become destitute, and the

1 Luke 16:19–31

2 See Acts 23:6–9.

3 John 9

Gentiles would become enlightened! Remember the end of the 490 years, AD 33?

3. With roles and opportunities exchanged, the converted Jew in torment cries out to the Gentile in heaven, **“I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.”**

**“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’**

**“No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’**

**“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”<sup>1</sup>**

Jesus concluded the tale by placing himself in the heart of the story saying that even if someone rises from the dead, they will not be convinced—they are that hard-hearted. Like Peter’s vision of the unclean animals, Jesus designed the story of the rich man and Lazarus to teach the Jews an important lesson. He did not design it to confirm a theological point. As we have learned, the Bible always offers a consistent message. Its inspiration comes from One who changes not.

### **The Destiny of the Wicked**

The Bible says burning in hell forever is not the penalty for sin, instead there is another penalty. The Bible says, **“The wages of sin is death.”** The Bible plainly says there will be a hellfire! **“But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the Devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur.”<sup>2</sup>**

Malachi, the Old Testament prophet, saw the complete destruction of the wicked. **“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,’ says the Lord Almighty.”<sup>3</sup>**

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1 Luke 16:28–31

2 Revelation 20:9–10

3 Malachi 4:1–3

### Two Additional Difficult Texts

Revelation 20:10 says, “**They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever,**” and Revelation 14:11 says, “**And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever.**”

At first glance, these texts seem to imply an eternally burning hell. Is it God’s unquenchable wrath to burn and scorch people for ever and ever?

First, we have determined that the wages of sin is death. Death, according to many Bible writers, means sleep or a state of unconsciousness. So, the wicked could not suffer eternally because they would never die (reach a state of unconsciousness) and the penalty (wages) of sin would never be paid.

The second text<sup>1</sup> indicates that the *smoke* from the destruction of the wicked rises for ever and ever. If the complete destruction of the wicked means an end to sin and sinners, the scriptures then indicate that the smoke of their torment cannot be put out. The lake of fire will consume sin and sinners until nothing remains.

Revelation 20:10 seems to indicate that the wicked are tormented day and night eternally. Actually, John was expressing two important ideas. First, sinners burn differing lengths of time and secondly, while they burn, they feel the torment of their suffering.

We know the wicked will be eventually reduced to ashes.<sup>2</sup> We also know the wicked will be burned up and that there will be a new heaven and a new earth for the first earth is passed away!<sup>3</sup> Additionally, we know the earth and everything in it will melt from great heat and be laid bare.<sup>4</sup> From the weight of all Bible evidence, we can interpret John’s comments in Revelation 20:10 indicating the wicked are tormented day and night forever to mean *as long as they exist*. Like marriage (forgive the comparison), the torment lasts forever for as long as both shall live.

### Hellfire—Not the Greatest Punishment

The greatest punishment that Jesus imposes on His created beings at the very end is not hellfire. Rather, the greatest punishment placed upon

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1 Revelation 14:11

2 Malachi 4

3 Revelation 21:1

4 2 Peter 3

the wicked at the end of the millennium is a revelation of God's tender love for each person. Let's explore the order of events.

- At the second coming, Jesus takes the saints to heaven and the wicked remaining on the earth are slain by the brightness of Jesus' glory. The earth is desolated by the splendor of righteousness!
- The saints (the resurrected and the living) are caught up with Jesus in the air and are taken to heaven for 1,000 years. This is because Jesus wants each redeemed person to understand that His decision on those not in heaven was fair. In other words, the saints review the books of record. They learn, firsthand, why Jesus did not grant a loved one or friend eternal life. Every mystery will be laid open. After the saints review Jesus' decision on each person, they will understand that He was loving, just, and merciful in His judgment. Even more, the saints will determine the amount of suffering that each wicked person is to receive! God requires that full atonement for sins be made. This is why vengeance is His to repay.
- At the end of the 1,000 years, the saints return to earth with Jesus. Jesus resurrects the wicked to see New Jerusalem and the saints within the city. Satan, who was bound to the desolate earth, now stirs the wicked to attack the New Jerusalem and rob the redeemed of their home. As the mob rushes toward the city, Jesus stops the vast throng just like He commanded the storm on Galilee to be still.
- Then, every eye is drawn to the sky, where Jesus shows a great panorama of salvation's story. Each person (saints and sinners) watches the drama, for the most incredible event to ever happen is now to take place. The giant screenplay in the heavens tells the big story of God's love and replays each person's life before its owner. Both saints and sinners stand in awe. Now they see as never before the extended mercy of salvation—the mystery of God. Now they comprehend what they dimly understood before. The saints see the humility of Jesus, and sinners see paradise lost. The wicked view the One who loved them beyond understanding, the One who died that they might have the opportunity of salvation!
- Every knee will bow before Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. They are righteous and fair. They are love. The wicked bow before

their justice. The saints bow before their mercy. Now, at this grand moment, in front of all human beings who have ever lived, Jesus breaks the seventh and final seal on the Book of Life. The book is opened. Now the innumerable multitude understands a new dimension about God. He foreknew all this. His written record, sealed before Jesus created earth, is *exactly* the same as the story contained in the books of record and reviewed in the sky!

- God will be exonerated before His creatures. God has been proven as a God of love. He freely granted His creatures the power of choice. Now, Satan stands before the vast multitude as a despicable liar. The evidence proves that God did not use His foreknowledge to manipulate or control the outcome of any event. His creatures truly have the greatest power outside of divinity, the power of choice.

The saints will rejoice with unbounding joy at the choices they made; the choice to live by faith, follow Jesus, struggle against sin, be what Jesus wanted them to be, do what He wanted, and go wherever He directed!

On the other hand, the sinners will be crushed. In despair beyond words, they see the tragic result of their choices. They look at the Holy City, Jesus, and the saints and a grief beyond comprehension overtakes them. They will have no anger against the Godhead. The Godhead is love, and the wicked will stand before them with regret beyond understanding. Their regret is not based on heart-felt repentance; rather, it is based on the consequence of seeing what they have lost. Their seeds of rebellion are so deep that repentance is impossible. In agony beyond description, they turn on each other to vent their anguish. In mercy, Jesus sends fire down from heaven and ends the nightmare. Ultimately, sin and sinners will be gone.

And now we can understand a portion of God's justice. He would not require someone to burn for 10 billion years (and this is just the beginning of eternity) for a life of sin lasting only 70 years. In God's system of justice, the penalty is *always* commensurate with the crime. Fairness requires no more and no less.



# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The book of Revelation can be compared to the electrical panel in your house. As all wires meet and end in the panel, so all books of the Bible meet and end in Revelation. For this reason, I am using many references in this book. Revelation can only be understood with the help of other scriptures. It cannot stand alone. For example, Revelation makes hundreds of allusions to phrases or ideas from the Old Testament.

Revelation's story is intimately connected to all the books in the Bible. For this reason, I have covered four essential doctrines thus far because a proper understanding of these doctrines is necessary to understand Revelation's story.

- The second coming of Jesus
- Salvation and sanctification by faith
- The work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary
- The pre-advent judgment and the state of the dead

We will cover one more essential doctrine in Chapter 17—the truth about worship. Revelation predicts that all the world will worship the great antichrist system that will soon appear on the earth, **“all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life!”**<sup>1</sup>

Revelation's story begins with a reward to all who study the book: **“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”**<sup>2</sup> When prophecy reaches the moment of fulfillment, its language becomes potent with meaning. A special blessing *now* belongs

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1 Revelation 13:8

2 Revelation 1:3

to those who study Revelation because the final days just before Christ's return have come!

### **Don't Overlook the Details**

Revelation seems to be a confusion of symbols and beasts. However, Revelation's story follows a very detailed progression. The prophecy student must consider two important elements when studying Revelation. First, there are 12 apocalyptic prophecies in Revelation and each prophecy has a beginning point and an ending point in time. Second, each prophecy is cross-linked with other prophecies so if an element within the prophecy is obscure, another prophecy will help explain its meaning.

One of the most common faults found among prophecy students is that they often fail to satisfy *all* the specifications that go with a particular element. For example, in Revelation 13, John saw a composite beast coming out of the sea with seven heads and 10 horns. In the first few verses, John explains that the seven heads have blasphemous names. He also said that one of the heads had been wounded, but the deadly wound had been healed when this beast comes from the sea. As we cross-reference with Revelation 17, an angel told John that the seven heads are seven hills and are also seven kings. John is also told that five have fallen, one is, and one is yet to come. In addition to these specifications, the angel told John that the beast from the Abyss is an eighth king, but he belongs to the seven heads. Understand that *all* specifications in Revelation 13 and 17 about the heads must be satisfied before we can correctly interpret the identity of the heads.

### **Language Types**

As you already know, the gospel of salvation is not hard to understand. I sum this up in the word GOBEDO. In other words, if you are willing to GO where God directs, BE all that God requires, and DO all that He commands, you are living by faith! Billions of people will hear the gospel and understand it in a very short time, so it can't be that hard to understand.

However, Revelation is more difficult to comprehend since many of the events predicted within the book have not yet happened. Once God's judgments begin to fall, Revelation's story will be quite easy to explain. For now, the hardest part of understanding Revelation is grasping a handle on the

cryptic language. Revelation uses three types of language—literal, symbolic, and analogous—and these three are mixed throughout the book. Discerning whether its language is literal, symbolic, or analogous, however, can be difficult and confusing. So, here are some samples of each language type.

### Literal Language

**“And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads. . . and on each head a blasphemous name.”<sup>1</sup>**

The numbers ten and seven are literal. Numbers in Bible prophecy are always literal, although what they refer to may be symbolic. John literally saw ten horns and seven heads. Now the horns and heads are symbolic, for they are discussed and explained in Revelation 17. In this case, we know the heads and horns are symbolic because the meaning of the symbols is given later.

Numbers cannot be symbolic for two reasons. First, a number always specifies a certain quantity. For example, there are seven seals in Revelation. We can confirm that the number seven is literal by counting. Second, what would be the value in using one number to represent another. For example, would it make sense if the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 symbolized 37 actual years?

In a secondary sense, numbers can indicate something beyond their literal meaning. For example, the number seven is often used to demonstrate fullness or completeness. There are seven days in a week, seven colors in the rainbow, seven notes to the musical scale, seven trumpets in Revelation, and seven sayings of Jesus on the cross. The number seven is literal in each case, but we also see that seven implies fullness or a state of completion.

### Symbolic Language

**“There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.<sup>2</sup> The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”<sup>3</sup>**

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1 Revelation 13:1

2 Revelation 17:3

3 Revelation 17:5

Who is this woman wearing the title Babylon? The Bible says, “**The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.**”<sup>1</sup> If we suspect the language to be symbolic, a relevant text *must* define the symbol. The keyword here is *relevant*. A symbol can have different meanings at different times!<sup>2</sup>

Here is an example of symbolic language. “**Their bodies [the Two Witnesses] will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified.**”<sup>3</sup> It is a historical fact that Jesus was not crucified in Sodom or in Egypt. Instead, He was crucified just outside the gates of Jerusalem. Revelation predicts the Two Witnesses will lie in the street of *the great city*. From Revelation 17:18, we know the great city is the prostitute, Babylon.

Revelation 11:8 states that Babylon will be like Sodom and Egypt. Sodom was noted for unrestrained evil and Egypt was known for hardness of heart (as manifested by Pharaoh). Both Sodom and the ruler of Egypt passed the point of no return. Babylon will do the same. Babylon’s leaders and followers will war against the saints.

Revelation uses just a few words in symbolic language to emphasize important points. The book of Revelation is very short (only 17 pages in my Bible), but it unveils volumes about the end of the world!

### Analogous Language

“**The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces.**”<sup>4</sup>

The language of this text is a comparison or analogy. The locusts *looked like horses*, but they weren’t horses. The locusts did not symbolize horses either, for if they did, other scriptures would define the meaning of the horses. The word analogous means things that belong in different categories but do have many similarities. Revelation 9:7 has many of the same analogous attributes described in Joel 2. Read it and notice the parallels as Joel tells about the second coming of Jesus with all His holy angels.

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1 Revelation 17:18

2 Compare Revelation 12:9 with Numbers 21:9 & John 3:14.

3 Revelation 11:8

4 Revelation 9:7

## Combined Language Types

One issue that makes interpretation difficult is that language types are sometimes mixed in the same sentence. Let's consider a couple of examples.

**“The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed.”**<sup>1</sup> In this verse, we learn that the great city that rules over the world (symbolically Babylon) will be split into three (literal) parts at Jesus' second coming while the (literal) cities of the nations collapse.

**“The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”**<sup>2</sup> The prostitute of Revelation 17 is the great prostitute that rules over the nations.

How can we tell which type of language is being used? How can we know if a term is literal, symbolic, or analogous? Since mixing language can result in bizarre interpretations, we must be very careful. We need a set of rules to govern our methods of interpretation.

## Rules of Interpretation

The rules we use to interpret Revelation naturally affect our conclusions. Anytime we change the rules, we change the conclusions. It is not easy to discern the rules of interpretation. The only way to discover them is to first read and study extensively, and then look for recurring patterns. If a pattern constantly appears, it *may* be a rule of interpretation. Since the Bible does not state rules of interpretation, we are still left with the element of faith, for no one can prove something that hasn't happened.

## Distinctive Treatment Necessary

Remember, each of the five prophecy types deserves distinctive treatment. If we mix the prophecies or merge their respective rules of interpretation, we cannot interpret them. Since we are studying apocalyptic prophecy, we need to consider three of the four rules of apocalyptic prophecy that help us understand the language used in this type of prophecy.

1. Each apocalyptic prophecy always has a beginning point and ending point in time, and the events within each prophecy occur in the order they are given. Because apocalyptic prophecies have a beginning and ending point in time, they cannot have multiple fulfillments. So,

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1 Revelation 16:19

2 Revelation 17:18

an apocalyptic sequence can only occur once. Apocalyptic prophecy contains events between the beginning and ending points so we can determine our timing within the prophecy. Intermediate events within the prophecy must happen in the order in which they are presented.

2. A prophecy or prophetic element is not fulfilled until all the specifications of the prophecy are met—including the order of the events given within the prophecy. All other prophecies of the Bible are subordinate to the chronological structure of apocalyptic prophecy. This means that apocalyptic prophecy holds greater weight in terms of chronology than non-apocalyptic prophecies. God has not shown *everything* He intends to accomplish to one prophet.<sup>1</sup> Each time God speaks to a prophet about the end of time, He provides more detail. So, we who live in the last days can organize the visions of the prophets and fit the pieces together far better than they could. Today's generation can look backward for nearly 6,000 years and see more detail about God's dealings with man than the prophets of old. Because of this, we can organize the fulfillments of apocalyptic prophecy much more clearly.
3. Apocalyptic language can be literal, symbolic, or analogous. A prophecy student must consider the context, the use of parallel language in the Bible, and for symbolic language, a relevant text that defines the symbol to reach the intended meaning of a passage. When the timing of a prophecy is applicable, the language of the prophecy becomes potent. For example, John began Revelation by writing, "**The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.**"<sup>2</sup> The words *must soon take place* could not apply 2,000 years ago when John received his vision. Reason requires that words mean what they say. When a prophecy becomes present truth, the language of the prophecy becomes potent with meaning. If the language is symbolic, the meaning of the symbol must be explained by relevant scripture. We cannot make up our own interpretation of symbols. The Bible must interpret itself.

Let's consider how these rules apply to the study of apocalyptic prophecy. According to Rule 1, I have found 17 apocalyptic prophecies in the Bible.

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1 1 Corinthians 13:9

2 Revelation 1:1

It is very important to understand the primacy of apocalyptic structure. For example, the Bible numbers the trumpets of Revelation, and they occur in consecutive order. If a student demonstrates an interpretation of trumpet five, that interpretation must recognize the chronological timing of trumpet four because trumpet four must occur before trumpet five does.

If we apply Rule 2 to the interpretation of trumpet five, we must consider all specifications regarding trumpets one through four because all aspects of the trumpet prophecy must be met to have a true fulfillment. Since Jesus cannot have two second comings, prophecies with chronological sequences that lead up to that event can only have one fulfillment. In other words, if trumpets one through five occur, trumpet three cannot happen again because trumpet six is next sequentially.

### Historical Applications

Through the centuries, many so-called *fulfillments* have been claimed. The problem with these claims is that they cannot satisfy Rule 2, which requires that all the details relevant to the prophecy be fulfilled. Since God gives the details to the prophets, a fulfillment of the prophecy can only occur when all the specifications are met. Read Revelation 9:13–21 and then follow this interesting story.

In the 19th century, Dr. Josiah Litch, a Methodist minister, concluded that trumpets five and six<sup>1</sup> concerned Mohammedanism. He was convinced that the sixth trumpet predicted the fall of the Ottoman Turkish Empire. Dr. Litch wrote a book in 1838 titled *The Probability of the Second Coming of Christ About AD 1843* and in it, he wrote, “But the duration of their dominion (Muslims) over the Greek Empire (is) 541 years and 15 days. If the time for commencing the periods was at the time of the first onset of the Ottomans upon the Greeks, July 27, 1299, then the whole period will end in August, 1840.” (p. 134) As August 1840 drew near, Litch calculated the actual date to be August 11.

Students of world history are aware of the powerful Ottoman Turkish Empire. For several centuries, these fierce Muslims were the undisputed rulers of the Middle East. However, the kingdoms of man come and go. The Ottoman Empire’s glory faded due to some humiliating wars. In 1774, Turkey signed a treaty with Russia allowing Russia to approve or veto certain

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1 Revelation 9

Turkish internal affairs. In 1833, Turkey signed another treaty with Russia which made the ruler of Turkey subject to the Russian tsar. In exchange, Russia provided Turkey with protection from an old enemy, Egypt. In 1839, Egypt seized the Turkish navy as well as a great deal of land. Turkey quickly appealed for help. Four nations (England, Russia, Austria, and Prussia) came to the rescue and forced a treaty between Turkey and Egypt, and it was signed in London in July 1840. The treaty required Egypt to release the Turkish navy, reduce the size of its army, withdraw from Syria, and resume paying tribute to Turkey.

On August 11, 1840, the treaty was presented to Mehemet Ali, the pasha of Egypt. Some historians have stated that Egypt's acceptance of the treaty left Turkey without sovereignty, thus they maintain the Ottoman Turkish Empire fell. But does this fulfill the specifications of the prophecy of the sixth trumpet? The fact that something of political importance happened on an anticipated day in August 1840, sent shivers among some prophetic students of that time. They were convinced that the sixth trumpet had been fulfilled. But was it? Were all details of the prophecy met? Four issues prevent me from regarding this action as a fulfillment of prophecy.

1. There is no question that the sixth trumpet war is a great war. But this trumpet does not identify which political power rises or falls because of the war. Litch thought the feud between Egypt and Turkey qualified, but the Ottoman Empire did not collapse in August 1840. Most historians agree that the Ottoman Empire fell at the end of World War I. Even this wasn't the end of Turkey; in fact, Turkey is a sovereign nation today.
2. In October 1582, Pope Gregory XIII approved a change to the Julian calendar to eliminate ten days from the calendar to correct cumulative error caused by the absence of a leap year of 366 days in the Julian calendar. Dr. Litch did not adjust the timing of his conclusions to compensate for this loss of 10 days, thus the August 11 date is invalid even if we follow his interpretation.
3. Dr. Litch assumed that the phrase, "an hour, a day, a month and a year" in Revelation 9:15 represented a quantity of 391 years, 15 days. He arrived at this conclusion by assuming the phrase was cumulative, and then he applied the day/year principle. Today, we know that the phrase was translated incorrectly in the KJV. The phrase represents a specific

moment in time rather than a sum of years. Most translations of the Bible today support this corrected understanding. The phrase is punctiliar. It says that the angels who were kept ready *for this hour, day, month, and year* were released.

4. The final and greatest obstacle to Dr. Litch's claim is that history does not support the fact that the first five trumpets were fulfilled before the sixth trumpet. If we follow the sequence of the seven trumpets, trumpet six can only occur after the first five trumpets have been fulfilled.

To his credit, Dr. Litch withdrew his claim that the sixth trumpet had been fulfilled in August 1840. He became convinced that what had appeared to be a fulfillment—was not a fulfillment. By 1873, Dr. Litch published a book titled *A Complete Harmony of Daniel and the Apocalypse*, stating that the trumpets were future literal events.

This short story reveals a very important issue. Throughout the centuries, many people have attempted to explain Revelation's story and show that some piece or part has been fulfilled, but the passage of time has proven them to be wrong. However, this does not lessen the value or the meaning of Revelation. The book was not sealed like the book of Daniel until the time of the end, so people through the centuries could do what Dr. Litch did. In other words, God has wisely kept interest in Revelation and the second advent alive by allowing people to reach conclusions or applications of Revelation that seem to apply in their day. The greater purpose for the book of Revelation is to reveal God's actions at the end of the world. Revelation has *one correct* message, and only the final generation who lives during the events predicted in it will completely understand the correct message. This is why we must maintain fidelity to the rules of interpretation that are now revealed. Unless all the rules are satisfied, we don't have fulfillment!

### **New Light in 1844**

The year 1844 did not come and go unnoticed on earth. As the year 1840 approached, many people in Europe and America began to understand that the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 were important. In America, they were generally called Millerites—followers of William Miller. Miller, a licensed Baptist minister, set northeastern America astir with his prophetic message that Jesus was returning to earth *on or about 1843*. Miller understood the *cleansing* of the sanctuary to be the cleansing of earth from sin. Thus,

he concluded, the second coming must occur at the end of the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 which would be sometime during 1843. Later he revised the date to 1844. At the height of his popularity, about 100,000 people of various denominations accepted his prophetic conclusion that Jesus was about to return!

Miller was not a single voice preaching on the imminent return of Jesus even though his prophetic views largely dissipated after 1844. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a high-water mark of spiritual interest in America. Great preachers of the *Second Great Awakening* include Charles G. Finney, Dwight L. Moody, and Billy Sunday. These and many others contributed to the spiritual revival of America and Europe at that time. Religious groups like the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians held camp meetings that began in Kentucky. During these *revivals*, thousands of people in the eastern part of America *got religion* and dedicated their lives to the Lord.

When Jesus didn't come as anticipated in 1844, the Millerite revival essentially died. Most Protestant churches became disillusioned with prophetic study and they became skeptical about prophecy for a century. Then, in the early 1970's, prophetic interest began to come alive. Suddenly, Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, became a best seller. But prophecy is only interesting if there is imminent fulfillment. For this reason, prophetic study seems to polarize people. It is either a topic of considerable interest, or it is a waste of time.

### When Does Revelation's Story Begin?

We must determine a point in time when the story begins, to appreciate and understand Revelation's story. Expositors from the Historical School of Thought (Historicists) assume the story began when Christ ascended (AD 30). After all, there are no specific dates mentioned in Revelation. On the other hand, Futurists assume that most of Revelation will begin with a rapture of all believers. So, when does the story start?

There are two answers to this question. Jesus told John, **“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.”**<sup>1</sup>

Just like Daniel's visions,<sup>2</sup> John's vision had information for *his day* and information for *our day*. Jesus gave some of the information to the seven

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1 Revelation 1:19

2 Daniel 8–12

churches which related to immediate problems within the churches. He told John to, “**Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.**”<sup>1</sup>

The messages to the seven churches initially belonged to the churches *at the time they were sent to them*. In a larger sense, the messages to the seven churches are timeless and universal because the seven churches still exist, just not in the same place or with the same people. People come and go. Times change. But the seven churches have remained because they represent the body of believers in Christ! However, the problems with sin haven’t changed, and so the promises and warnings Jesus gave each church still stand. In fact, Jesus concluded His message to each church saying, “**Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**”

The seven churches are not numbered one through seven. They are not sequential, chronological in order, or apocalyptic. They do not represent seven time periods since the ascension of Jesus. They simultaneously existed during John’s day and they simultaneously exist today.

We need to recognize three important elements in the messages to the seven churches and determine if they apply to us. We need to comprehend the description of Jesus as He is represented to each church, understand what He said to each church, and identify the promise He gave to each church.

### **Depictions of Jesus in Revelation’s Seven Churches**

What do the following descriptions in Revelation 1–3 reveal about Jesus? How does each one relate to the problems faced by each church?

1. **Ephesus:** Jesus holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven lampstands. {1:20–2:1}
2. **Smyrna:** Jesus is the First and Last, who died and came to life again. {2:8}
3. **Pergamum:** Jesus has the sharp, double-edged sword. {2:12}
4. **Thyatira:** Jesus is the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. {2:18}
5. **Sardis:** Jesus holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. {3:1}

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1 Revelation 1:11

6. **Philadelphia:** Jesus has the key of David. What He shuts—no one can open. What He opens—no one can shut. He sets before us an open door that no one can shut. {3:7–8}
7. **Laodicea:** Jesus is the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. {3:14}

### Jesus’ Timeless Words

What did Jesus say to each church?

1. **Ephesus:** You have forsaken your first love. {2:4}
2. **Smyrna:** You are afflicted and poor—yet you are rich. Be faithful unto death. {2:9–10}
3. **Pergamum:** You sin by gluttony and sexual immorality Balaam style. (*Balaam style* refers to immoral sins committed with heathen who don’t know any better.<sup>1</sup>) {2:14}
4. **Thyatira:** You sin by gluttony and sexual immorality Jezebel style. (This refers to sins committed within the church by those knowing better.<sup>2</sup>) {2:20}
5. **Sardis:** You are dead. Wake up! {3:1–2}
6. **Philadelphia:** You are weak but you are faithful. Hang on. {3:8, 10–11}
7. **Laodicea:** You are neither hot nor cold. Repent! {3:15, 19}

### The Promise Jesus Gave

What was the promise that Jesus gave to overcomers in each church?

1. **Ephesus:** Those overcoming will have the right to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the paradise of God. {2:7}
2. **Smyrna:** Those overcoming will not be hurt by the second death. {2:11}
3. **Pergamum:** Those overcoming will receive some of the hidden manna and a white stone with a new name on it. {2:17}
4. **Thyatira:** Those overcoming will have authority over the nations. {2:26}

1 Numbers 22–24

2 Compare with 1 Kings 21 and 2 Kings 9.

5. **Sardis:** Those overcoming will be dressed in white and their names will never be erased from the Book of Life. {3:5}
6. **Philadelphia:** Those overcoming will become a pillar in the temple of God. {3:12}
7. **Laodicea:** Those overcoming will have the right to sit with Jesus on His throne. {3:21}

### To the Sincere in All Churches

*Jesus will fulfill the promise He gave to each church when He comes. He says, “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* The messages to the seven churches are timeless. As the number seven denotes fullness or wholeness, the seven churches represent all children of God—scattered all over the earth. Which church describes your experience in the Lord? The glory of Jesus is not dimmed by time. Even though He clearly sees the frailty and weakness of His people, He blends encouragement with divine warning. His promised rewards far surpass any price we may have to pay. To God be the glory!

### Summary

Revelation follows a very careful outline. Jesus designed Revelation for two important purposes. First, if you understand the story, it will change your life. God wants His people prepared for the soon-coming events. Second, Revelation will provide credibility to the message that God’s people will give just before the second coming and people everywhere will learn that Bible prophecy can be trusted when rightly understood.

The story, language, and meaning of Revelation combine in an integral way to reveal who Jesus really is and to reveal *all* that Jesus is! Hence the last book in the Bible is called, *The Revelation of Jesus*.

Rules of interpretation are vitally important. Rules are directly connected to conclusions, and rules are no respecter of bias, scholarship, or denomination.

Revelation had information for the seven churches that existed during John’s day. Revelation also contains information for earth’s final generation. The core message to each of the seven churches is still applicable today. Which church do you belong to? Will you be found among the overcomers when Jesus returns?





# The Seven Seals

There are hundreds of interpretations about the meaning of the seven seals in Revelation. However, when the story of the seals is incorporated into the prophetic matrix,<sup>1</sup> we can understand the timing and meaning of the seals. I believe that we can only correctly understand how the seals operate by correlating their timing with other prophecies. Therefore, the rules of interpretation will be very important in this study.

### **A Conclusion Comes First**

To help you understand where this study is going, I will share my understanding of the meaning of the first three seals. Then, as this chapter unfolds, you can see how I reached these conclusions.

The seven seals of Revelation are like graduation diplomas. When a child completes the eighth grade, he receives a diploma. Then, when he graduates from high school, he receives another. Later, when he graduates from college, he receives another diploma. If he goes on to graduate school and graduates, he receives another. These diplomas represent specific accomplishments by the graduate. With each diploma, the graduate exhibits more skills, becomes more valuable, and demands for his accomplishments grow.

Before Jesus created the angels or human beings, the Father wrote a book revealing everything that would happen in the universe. He securely sealed the book with seven seals so that no one could see what was in the book. The Father designed that when the time was right, this book would be opened, and its contents revealed. His purpose for the book is that He wants everyone to understand that He knew about Lucifer's evil actions, Adam and Eve's fall into sin, and even the details of our lives before we came to be. More importantly, He wants everyone to see that even though

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1 Appendix A

He knew that sin was going to happen, He *never* prevented any angel or person from exercising their right to make choices.

The Father also designed that when the time came to open the book, there would be a precise process connected to exposing the contents. This process is the full disclosure that Jesus is as much God as is the Father. Jesus possesses every power that the Father has. However, Jesus has always kept His glory and authority veiled from angels as well as men. However, the Plan of Salvation requires that Jesus be fully disclosed. As each seal opens, more about Jesus is revealed, both in heaven and on earth. This is why the last book of the Bible is called the *Revelation* of Jesus.

Remember the parallel of diplomas. The seven seals are like seven diplomas. As each diploma reveals more about the accomplishments and worthiness of the graduate, so each broken seal reveals more about Jesus.

### **The Seals are Connected to Events on Earth**

The opening of the seals is directly connected to events transpiring on earth. The first seal represents salvation through Jesus. This seal was opened shortly after 1798. For 1,260 years, the Roman Catholic Church had claimed to hold the keys of life and death. The Church taught that salvation was only possible through her application of sacraments. Shortly after the Church fell in 1798, Jesus opened the first seal and sent a revival message throughout the world that salvation was only available through Him, not any church. Historically, we find the effect of opening the first seal on earth called the *Great Awakening* which occurred in Europe and America during the first half of the 19th century.

The second seal represents the translation, printing, and distribution of the Bible throughout the world. This seal complemented the work begun under the first seal. When people heard about salvation through Jesus, they wanted Bibles to study Christ's salvation for themselves. Missionary and Bible societies formed and rapidly grew, both in Europe and America. Thus, this seal revealed that Jesus' teachings were supreme over the vain teachings of men.

The third seal represents the proclamation of the judgment-hour message that began in 1844. This seal exposes the ministry of Jesus in heaven's sanctuary. It reveals that He has been found worthy to judge human beings. He also raised a body of people to proclaim this truth to the world.

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As we consider the first three seals, we find a beautiful process. The first seal represents salvation through Jesus contrasted against the salvation controlled by the Church. The second seal represents the supremacy of the Word of Jesus contrasted against the foolish teachings of men. And, the third seal reveals the ministry of Jesus in heaven which began in 1844. Thus, the opening of these three seals reveals Jesus' accomplishments and worthiness. In fact, when the next seal (the fourth) is opened, the authority of Jesus will be suddenly and shockingly revealed to the whole world.

### **The Rules of Interpretation**

Previously I presented four rules of interpretation for apocalyptic prophecies. These will become very valuable as we apply them in this chapter. Here's a brief overview of the rules.

1. Apocalyptic prophecies have beginning and ending points in time. Events within the prophecy must occur in the order in which they are presented.
2. Apocalyptic prophecy is not fulfilled until all the specifications and the order of events within the prophecy are both met.
3. Those elements believed to be symbolic must be interpreted by applicable scripture for the Bible must interpret itself.
4. The Jubilee Calendar controls whether prophetic time is a day for a year or a literal period.

### **When Does Revelation's Story Begin?**

We must have a beginning point in time to understand any of Revelation's prophecies. Because apocalyptic prophecy deals with a predicted sequence of events, a chronological beginning date is extremely important. We confirmed this in our study on Daniel 8 and 9.<sup>1</sup> The decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in 457 BC marked the beginning of the 490 years as well as the 2,300-year prophecy!

We also know that Revelation (like Daniel) contains some information for John's day *and* information on events that will occur in the future. For example, the seven churches existed during John's day; we know about their problems and the warnings from Jesus.<sup>2</sup> We also know that Revelation deals with events that will happen in the future.

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1 Chapters 7 & 8

2 Revelation 1:11, 19; 2:1–3:22

Revelation 4 starts an important prophecy. This prophecy tells of a great convocation in heaven where Jesus is found worthy to take a book sealed with seven seals. Upon receiving the book, Jesus begins to open the book by breaking one seal at a time.

### **The All-Important Ceremony**

Stop! You need to read all of Revelation 4 and 5 before proceeding. This is necessary so you are acquainted with the details of the story.

### **The Elders**

Revelation 4:4 describes 24 elders sitting on 24 thrones surrounding a single throne. The Bible doesn't directly explain who they are, but they are mentioned 12 times in Revelation. However, some very strong clues reveal the identity of the elders. First, the term elder means *one who has gone before*, or someone of greater experience. Revelation 5:9 indicates that the elders have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Paul tells us that Jesus took some resurrected people to heaven with Him at the time of His ascension.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the greatest evidence supporting the idea that these are people who once lived on earth is the location of their thrones. Understand that billions of angels are in this assembly. The judgment of human beings is about to begin. The year is 1798 and who should God give a front-row seat to observe the fairness and mercy of Jesus as He judges humanity? Those who have been redeemed—the peers of those who will be saved or condemned.

### **The Lamb's Book**

John watched as the Lamb was deemed worthy to take this all-important book from the right hand of the Father.<sup>2</sup> Even though John did not call the book sealed with seven seals the *Book of Life* in Chapter 4, he referred to it as the *Lamb's Book of Life* in other texts in Revelation. John calls it the *Lamb's Book of Life* because it is the only book the Lamb receives in Revelation's story. Read these Bible texts.

**“All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life.”<sup>3</sup>**

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1 Matthew 27:51–52; Ephesians 4:7–8

2 Revelation 5:7

3 Revelation 13:8

**“The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast.”**<sup>1</sup> Note when the Book of Life was written.

**“Nothing impure will ever enter it (New Jerusalem), nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”**<sup>2</sup>

Daniel knew of this special book although he did not call it by name! Daniel mentioned the book when he wrote about the close of probation, **“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.”**<sup>3</sup>

King David knew of this book. **“Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”**<sup>4</sup> Moses knew of this book.<sup>5</sup> Jesus also spoke to His disciples about this book.<sup>6</sup>

Only one Bible text tells us when this book is completely opened—at the end of the 1,000 years. This is when the seventh seal will be broken. John writes, **“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life.”**<sup>7</sup>

The Father wrote and securely sealed the Book of Life before anything was created, including the angels. It contains the story of Lucifer and his rebellion, the fall of Adam and Eve, and the implementation of the Plan of Salvation. This book contains a record of everything and everyone before created beings came to be. When the great day of final reckoning comes at the end of the thousand years, the hosts of earth and heaven will be brought together to stand before God. At this one-and-only time in

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1 Revelation 17:8

2 Revelation 21:27

3 Daniel 12:1

4 Psalm 139:16

5 Exodus 32:32

6 Luke 10:20

7 Revelation 20:12

earth's existence, all members of the human race will be alive! It's a grand and terrible moment.<sup>1</sup>

When Jesus resurrects the wicked of earth, Satan will immediately incite the vast multitude to rebel. He will convince the numberless crowd that God intends to do them harm and launch an angry rebellion to destroy the New Jerusalem and the saints inside. When the wicked rush on the city, Jesus will speak. Instantly, the multitude will stop in their tracks. Silence overtakes the breathless mob for about half an hour.<sup>2</sup> Jesus, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, speaks. The anger and rebellion of the numberless mob is suspended. As lightning pierces darkness, the wicked realize they stand before their Maker. He is not a tyrant. He is not angry. He speaks in a voice that is gentle but firm.

Jesus will then display the Plan of Salvation to the multitude. The wicked will see God's extended love. Each person will understand the economy of salvation. Jesus will present each person's life from the books of heaven's record. The wicked will see their deeds just as God saw their deeds. Each person will see the spiritual influences of good and evil upon their life. They will see the choices they made. He who sees the hearts and reads the motives will reveal their sinful lives to them with unvarnished clarity. The wicked know why they are condemned. All justification for sin is expelled in the light of God's records. With every motive fully exposed, sin is seen as nothing more than love for self. The wicked now know what the love of Jesus is, why He died on Calvary and, most of all, why they cannot be saved. At the end of this revelation, everyone will bow before Jesus with overwhelming emotion. The wicked must admit Jesus has been fair and just in His eternal decision.

As the wicked see their lives pass before their eyes, the righteous will also see their own sinful lives from their position in the Holy City. The saints will see the story of salvation. At the end, they too will kneel before Jesus. Instead of acknowledging God's fairness and justice, the saints will be awed by Jesus' unbelievable mercy. One group kneels before His justice, the other before His mercy—but every knee will bow.

Jesus predicted long ago, **“Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are deliverance**

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1 Revelation 20

2 Revelation 8:1

**and strength.’ All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the Lord.**”<sup>1</sup> Even though the wicked admit God’s justice and love, they cannot change their evil course, for outside of God’s power there is no power to overcome sin. Such is the heinous nature and cancer of sin.

John wrote, **“Another book was opened, which is the book of life.”** At last, the breaking of the seventh seal will allow Jesus to open the final seal of the mysterious Book of Life. Heaven’s most intriguing book has been sealed for thousands of years. It contains the history of everything and includes the names of those who will live forever (angels included). This is why the book is called the Book of Life.

What a moment! What a day! A hush falls upon the audience as they see that the books of record, those books recorded by unerring angels, are identical to the Book of Life. In other words, the Father precisely wrote everything that would happen and the books of record confirm that He knew in advance what choices His creatures would make!

If the total number redeemed of all ages was 14,567,259,123,382, then that’s the exact number of names remaining in the Book of Life. God blotted out the names of the wicked when He wrote the book. Both the wicked and the righteous look into the book with amazement. The wicked cannot argue against the salvation of the saints, because Jesus revealed His mercy and justice to them. The righteous stand in awe that Jesus knew them by name before the world existed.

### **Book of Life is Evidence**

The opening of this book unquestionably proves God’s omniscience. He knows everything about everything. The contents of the book, which God wrote before beings were created, clearly describe what has occurred in heaven and on earth. Each angel and member of the human family sees the story written in the Book of Life and knows the story is accurate because he sees himself as a character in the story. The Book of Life is identical to the books of record with one exception. The names of the wicked have been blotted out of the Book of Life.

The Book of Life also unquestionably proves God granted the power of choice to each person. Each angel and member of the human family will see

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1 Isaiah 45:23–25

from the books of record that his eternal reward was his own choice. Those inside the New Jerusalem know they are only there because they chose Jesus as their Savior. Those outside the city know they are there because they chose to reject the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Even though God knows everything about everything, He does not manipulate His subjects based on foreknowledge. He freely gave the power of choice to all His children and the contents of this book confirm it. God knew what was going to happen, He knew the price sin would extract. Yet, He went forward creating angels and human beings and gave them the power of choice.

I am convinced the Book of Life will be studied for eternity. The redeemed will have the opportunity to compare its contents with the Bible and the books of record throughout the ages, for they will marvel at God's love and works.

One final and very important point. The greatest punishment God can give an angel or a human being is the *reality of forfeiture*. When the wicked see with their own eyes what they *chose* to forfeit, words will not be able to describe their anguish. The wicked, in rage, will turn and vent their remorse against each other.<sup>1</sup> They will attack one another and to finish the carnage, Jesus sends fire from heaven and reduces them to ashes. Sin and sinners are no more. The universe is free of sin at last!

### **Back to the Book with Seven Seals**

We need to identify when Jesus took the book sealed with seven seals. There are three logical options for when He took the book.

1. Shortly after His ascension
2. 1798
3. Sometime in the future

The Bible answers the question. In fact, Daniel provides the key. Let's read Daniel's vision as recorded in Daniel 7

**“As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon**

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<sup>1</sup> Zechariah 14:12–13

thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

**“Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)**

**“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”<sup>1</sup>**

Daniel described the time that the Ancient of Days took His seat and the court scene in heaven begins. This happened in 1798 at the end of the little horn power’s reign. **“As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.”<sup>2</sup>** We know from Daniel 7:25 that the little horn power would persecute the saints for 1,260 years. Remember, Napoleon inflicted a deadly wound on the papacy in February 1798, when he captured the pope and put him in prison.

Because we can’t see what is going on in heaven, God has connected events on earth with events in heaven. Bible prophecy is our connection between the two. Thus, the court scene in heaven began when the time allotted to the little horn power expired in 1798.

### **Consider the Parallels**

Several important parallels exist between Daniel 7 and Revelation 4 and 5. The most important parallel in these two scenes is that Jesus is especially honored. According to Daniel, Jesus receives authority, glory, and sovereign power *when the court scene commences* in 1798. According to John, Jesus is given the seven attributes of God—wealth, wisdom, glory, honor, power, praise, and authority when He is found worthy to receive the Book of Life.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Daniel 7:9–14

2 Daniel 7:21–22

3 Revelation 5:12

According to Daniel, Jesus receives sovereign power in 1798; and according to John, Jesus receives all the attributes of God when He is found worthy to receive the book sealed with seven seals. These two events are related and must have occurred in the same service. Consider these amazing parallels.

Daniel 7:9 and Revelation 4:2, 4

- I looked, thrones were set in place.
- Before me was a throne surrounded by 24 thrones occupied by 24 elders.

Daniel 7:9 and Revelation 4:3–4

- The Ancient of Days took His seat. His clothing was as white as snow, the hair of His head was white like wool.
- The One who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. The elders were dressed in white.

Daniel 7:9–10 and Revelation 4:5

- His throne was flaming with fire and its wheels were all ablaze. And the books were opened.
- From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Seven lamps were blazing in front of the throne.

Daniel 7:13 and Revelation 5:7

- I saw one like a son of man. He approached the Ancient of Days.
- The Lamb approached the Father sitting on the throne and took the scroll from His right hand.

Daniel 7:14 and Revelation 5:9, 12

- He was given authority, glory and sovereign power.
- The elders sing of Jesus, “You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals.” Billions of angels sing, “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

The parallel between the scenes is indisputable. Daniel and John saw the same heavenly courtroom scene. Daniel saw a human being, like a *son of man*, approach the Father sitting on His throne; John saw a *Lamb looking like it had been slain* come before the Father as He sat upon His throne.

Daniel saw thrones put in place and the court convened with billions of angels in attendance. He saw the Father take His seat, and eventually, the books of records were opened in 1844. This is when the cleansing of heaven's sanctuary began. Daniel saw Jesus approach the Father and receive sovereign power and glory.

John also saw a great convocation in the throne room of the universe and specifically mentioned seeing 24 thrones around the Father's throne. Billions of angels were in attendance. Heaven's most important book was in the right hand of the Father. A search through the universe was conducted for someone worthy to receive this most important book—for a heavenly process could not continue until *this book* was received. John wept because he knew that no one could receive eternal life until someone was found worthy to receive the Book of Life and exonerate the Father. After an intensive investigation throughout the universe, Jesus was *judged* worthy to receive the book. The elders along with billions of angels sang enthusiastically as God conferred power, wealth, honor, and praise on Jesus.

### **Jesus Received Book of Life in 1798**

After comparing the two visions, there is no question that Daniel and John saw that the *Father gave Jesus special recognition when He received power, wealth, strength, wisdom, and praise*. From Daniel, we learn that Jesus was promoted at the time heaven's court convened in 1798. From John, we learn that Jesus was promoted at the time He received the book sealed with seven seals. The honor conferred upon Jesus in these scenes confirms that John and Daniel saw the same scene. Thus, the Book of Life was given to Jesus shortly after 1798.

Another explanation supporting 1798 as the correct date is that on the Old Testament Day of Atonement, the high priest had to be found worthy to officiate on behalf of Israel before he could conduct the service. If we understand the courtroom scene described by Daniel and John symbolizes the concluding services in the heavenly sanctuary, it is appropriate that Jesus must first be found worthy to conduct the judgment of human beings which is related to this occasion.

### **What Are the Seven Seals?**

The dictionary definition of a seal is a device that secures an object. In this case, the seven seals perfectly secure the contents of the Book of Life.

This means no one can access the book and change its contents. What God wrote in the book cannot be altered. In fact, the contents of the Book of Life were not described in Revelation's story. The contents will not be revealed until every person who has lived stands before Jesus! John saw *when* the book was opened,<sup>1</sup> but he did not see *what* was in the book.

As each seal opens, the contents of the book are nearer to exposure. The seals are numbered consecutively; thus when the fourth seal is opened, its events confirm its timing within the sequence of the seven seals. When the sixth seal is opened, the second coming of Jesus occurs—but keep in mind—the book still has one more seal to be opened. The book is not opened at the second coming because everyone involved is not alive at that time.

More importantly, we can only understand the opening of the seals when we understand their relationship to the book that is sealed. *What is the point of unsealing the book of seven seals if the exposure of the contents of the book is not the object of the sequence?* The seals progress in a definite sequence toward the climactic moment when the Book of Life is opened. The progression of the seals is viewed from heaven by billions of attending angels (remember, they haven't seen inside the book), and on earth by people studying Revelation's story. These elements may not be easy to understand at first, but those who study will understand. Daniel was told, **“None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.”**<sup>2</sup>

### A Brief Outline of the Seven Seals

1. Rider on white horse—sets out on conquest
2. Rider on red horse—carries sword throughout earth
3. Rider on black horse—tells of judgment
4. Rider on pale horse—brings devastation
5. Martyrs for truth's sake
6. The Lamb's second coming
7. Silence for about a half hour

Jesus received the Book of Life in 1798 and soon began to open the seals. We will see that the first three seals prepare the world for the events described in the next three seals.

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1 Revelation 20:12

2 Daniel 12:10

Before we examine the seals, we must understand an often-overlooked fact. John was in vision and he had been taken to the heavenly throne room to view events that would occur at the appointed time of the end. John was zoomed forward in time to see events occurring at the end of the world. Remember John was told, **“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.”**<sup>1</sup> Revelation 4:1–6:17 begins an apocalyptic sequence that started in 1798 and will end with the second coming.

### The Four Horses

The four horses of the first four seals are not unique in Revelation, for Zechariah saw four horses with the same colors. The angel told Zechariah the four horses represent the four spirits of heaven that stand in the presence of the Lord of all the earth.<sup>2</sup> These spirits go throughout the earth at God’s command to accomplish His will.<sup>3</sup> Zechariah saw the black horse go north, the white horse go west, the pale or dappled horse go south, and the red horse, by inference, go east.<sup>4</sup> These four horses symbolize the work of the four living creatures that stand in the presence of God. These four living creatures are seraphim or *senior angels* having great responsibilities.<sup>5</sup> The four living creatures are a special order of beings, created by God for service throughout His universe. These angels ensure that God’s desires are carried out.

### The Seals Begin

Each horse represents the works or actions of the four living creatures as Jesus commissions them. As Jesus opens each seal, He initiates a process from heaven that each living creature implements. All these processes lead to the consummation of the Plan of Salvation. The effect and influence of the seals is cumulative. This means that the conquering begun in Seal One is concluded in Seal Six. The process begun during Seal Two reaches its climax during Seal Five, and the proclamation during Seal Three prepares 144,000 special people for the events that transpire during Seal Four.

A seal doesn’t begin and end so that the next seal can begin and end. Rather, the first three seals begin certain processes which remain in motion

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1 Revelation 1:19

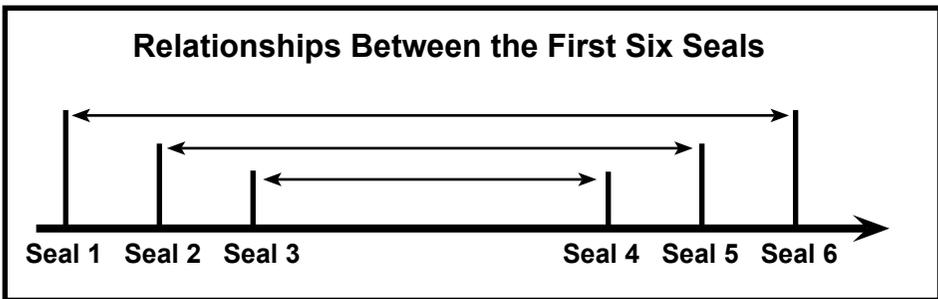
2 Zechariah 6:5

3 Zechariah 1:10–11

4 Zechariah 6:6

5 Revelation 4:8; Ezekiel 1 & 10

until their counterpart concludes their work. This is the reason that Jesus was given sovereign power. He started three processes on earth that He personally manages. Even more, He must direct these processes so that the gospel accomplishes its intended task. Matters as serious as salvation don't happen in random order. Paul said of Jesus, **“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”**<sup>1</sup>



Just as the rider of each horse controls its action, Jesus sends the four living creatures to earth with special assignments. As each *senior angel* prepares to do his work, John is invited to observe. Each angel invites John saying, “Come.”

### First Seal

**“I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.”**<sup>2</sup>

The rider of the first horse rode out of the heavenly sanctuary to conquer something on earth. However, the rider did not conquer anything during the first seal. No event on earth marked the opening of this seal. Rather, this seal marks the time when Jesus begins His conquest. In 1798, Jesus received all authority to conclude the sin problem by bringing the Plan of Salvation to its climax. The time had come to put the everlasting gospel in final form, for soon, it would go to every person on earth.

1 Colossians 1:16–17

2 Revelation 6:1–2

Because 1798 was over two centuries ago, you need to understand the contrast between the existing church and Jesus' plans. At that time, the Church of Rome claimed to be God's representative on earth. The Church claimed to hold the keys of salvation. The Church controlled its members either through excommunication and the belief they would not be saved or through political adversity. God decreed the time of the little horn power to be 1,260 years. When He brought the little horn power down, a vacuum for truth and salvation existed. Into this vacuum, Jesus sent a great spiritual awakening. This phenomenon is historically verifiable both in America and Europe.

Remember, the processes set in motion by the seals are additive in nature. Thus, the great revival in America and Europe in the early 19th century prepared the way for the next seal, and the first two seals prepared the way for the understanding of the third seal which would occur in 1844.

While the rider of the first horse did not conquer anything, the work that began under the first seal set the stage for the final presentation of the gospel. The entire world must hear the true gospel and the gospel is a revelation of Jesus. John saw the consummating victory of the gospel. He said, **"And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name."**<sup>1</sup>

## Second Seal

**"When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, 'Come!' Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword."**<sup>2</sup>

The rider of the second horse went out of the heavenly sanctuary with a large sword. This sword eventually will cause men to slay each other. Many Bible students are reluctant to identify this event as originating in heaven, but John's vantage point was clearly in heaven. However, the heavenly origin is not a problem. Jesus told his disciples, **"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."**<sup>3</sup>

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1 Revelation 15:2

2 Revelation 6:3–4

3 Matthew 10:34

The sword of Jesus is His word of truth. Hebrews 4:12 says, **“The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword.”** Paul said, **“Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”**<sup>1</sup> In Revelation 2:12, John described Jesus to the church in Pergamum as, **“Him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.”** Jesus said to this church, **“Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”**<sup>2</sup> If we follow the third rule of apocalyptic interpretation and allow the Bible to interpret itself, we must conclude from these texts that the sword represents the Word of God.

There will be war and bloodshed all over the earth because of the Word of God. The coming war will be a contest between truth and falsehood. This seal culminates in the fifth seal, a time when people will kill one another over God’s truth. A subtle but very important point is that the text describing the second seal does not necessarily mean that the slaying occurred *at the time* the second seal was opened. Neither was the conquering described in the first seal accomplished during the time of the first seal. Rather, the consequence of the second seal is *when peace is taken from the earth and men slay each other* on account of the sword!

We can look back to the time after 1798 and find an event on earth that historically marks the opening of this seal. After 1798, the gospel commission belonged to Protestants. They formed Bible societies during the early 19th century which fulfill the meaning of this seal. In those days, many Protestant churches in Europe and North America formed Bible and missionary societies to carry the gospel to all the world. Since then, the translation and distribution of the Bible in every nation on earth has grown immensely. By the end of the 19th century, Protestant denominations reached a high-water mark in establishing and developing missions. People gave liberally to print and distribute the Bible. In fact, no other book on earth has been translated and distributed as much as the Bible. No other book has exceeded the Bible’s popularity, and the coming great controversy will focus on it.

### Third Seal

**“When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider**

1 Ephesians 6:17

2 Revelation 2:16

**was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, ‘Two pounds of wheat for a day’s wages, and six pounds of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!’”<sup>1</sup>**

The rider of the third horse left the heavenly sanctuary with a pair of scales and a message. The scales imply judgment. Indeed, we know from Daniel that Jesus opened the books of record at the end of the 2,300 years in 1844 and He began investigating the records of those who have died. The work of the third living creature is to ensure that people on earth learn what Jesus is doing in the heavenly sanctuary. Since 1844, a significantly increasing population around the world is aware of the investigative judgment. Even though most of the ever-increasing numbers of people on earth do not understand the ongoing judgment process, millions do. Those who understand this truth will soon be able to explain the much more important judgment process that is coming: judgment of the living!

A promise of wages accompanies this seal. Jesus promises a full day’s wages to those who will help spread this special message. Just as Solomon paid the builders of his temple in wheat, barley, oil, and wine,<sup>2</sup> Jesus will pay the teachers of heaven’s temple. Even though nearly two centuries have passed since the judgment-hour message first began, and thousands of those who have labored to carry the judgment-hour message are now dead, they will receive their full reward. God is fair.

### **First Three Seals Set a Global Stage**

Historical evidence supports my claim that the first three seals have been opened. As each seal opened, there was a progressive revelation of the truth about Jesus in heaven and on earth. Who Jesus is, what He is, and how He intends to conclude the gospel commission is coming clearer to the watching angels and a growing number of people on earth. The first two seals were opened shortly after 1798 and in 1844, the third seal was opened. By 1874, the judgment-hour message was organized well enough to be proclaimed in foreign lands. For over 200 years, the activities described in these three seals have influenced the earth, in effect, setting the stage for what is about to happen.

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1 Revelation 6:5–6

2 2 Chronicles 2:10, 15

### Fourth Seal

**“When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.”<sup>1</sup>**

The opening of the fourth seal brings global devastation. The fourth living creature is the angel of death. This may be the same angel who flew over Egypt and killed the firstborn children and animals of the Egyptians.<sup>2</sup> It may also be the same angel who killed 185,000 of Sennacherib’s army.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of his identity, his influence on the earth is unmistakable. Jesus sends this senior angel to earth with four terrible judgments—sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts—to capture the attention of the world. Twenty-five percent of the earth’s population will perish in these judgments! Ezekiel 14:12–23 provides a clearer understanding of these four dreadful judgments.

The fourth seal will be the next one to open. At no time in earth’s history since Noah’s flood have human beings suffered the level of devastation described in the fourth seal. Obviously, the earth’s population has yet to experience this destruction, so chronologically, the fourth seal will occur in the future. The events during this seal are a great catalyst marking the beginning of the judgment of the living. The seven trumpets and seven last plagues, as described in Revelation, explain the coming death and destruction during the fourth seal.

Interestingly, senior angels (the four living creatures) conduct the first four seals. Jesus’ followers on earth carry out the fifth seal, and Jesus himself conducts the sixth seal.

### Fifth Seal

**“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’ Then each of them was given a white robe, and**

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1 Revelation 6:7–8

2 Exodus 12

3 2 Kings 19

**they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.”<sup>1</sup>**

The opening of the fifth seal ushers in a period of martyrdom. Jesus allows His people to experience martyrdom because persecution separates pretense from substance. When the price for being a Christian is great, only the pure in heart who love God’s truth will be willing to bear the cross and follow Jesus’ teachings.

For the most part, being a Christian in the US has come at little cost. We have religious liberty, freedom to worship without intimidation or fear, freedom of speech, and we can teach and believe whatever we want. We are truly blessed, but this blessing has brought a curse. We have become lazy, weak, and corrupt. Fair-weather Christians filled with external piety comprise much of Christianity today. Protestant America has become degenerate and looks more like a hospital for sin-sick people than an army of soldiers prepared for the final conflict with Satan.

Another reason the fifth seal brings martyrdom is that when the fifth seal is opened, Satan is physically on earth claiming to be God. Those following Jesus will immediately recognize the Devil and will do everything possible to tell the world of his supreme deceptions. With much of the world receiving the Devil as God, they will not look favorably on those who fearlessly identify the imposter (Antichrist) as the Devil. How would you feel if someone called your God the *Devi*? If ever there was an unholy war, this will be it. The evil imposter will tell those killing Jesus’ followers that they are doing God’s service.

### **Sixth Seal**

**“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and**

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1 Revelation 6:9–11

**from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?”<sup>1</sup>**

When Jesus opens the sixth seal, He will rescue His people. The opening of the sixth seal is Jesus’ second coming. John describes King Jesus as riding on the white horse, having the title, **“KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”** on His sash.<sup>2</sup>

Just as the work of the first seal began on a white horse in 1798, Jesus will conclude the work of the sixth seal on a white horse. Jesus set out to conquer in 1798 and at the second coming, He will conquer. John says, **“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.”<sup>3</sup> “Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’”<sup>4</sup>**

### **Seventh Seal**

**“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”<sup>5</sup>**

Jesus will open the seventh seal at the end of the 1,000 years—finally unsealing and exposing the story in the Book of Life. We will study the seventh seal when we review the events at the end of the millennium.

### **Summary**

The first three seals prepare the world stage for the next three seals to develop. If we compare each seal with its corresponding partner, we can see the relationships between the seals. For example, the work begun during the first seal is fulfilled under the sixth seal. The work during the second seal is fulfilled with the fifth seal. The message begun under the third seal culminates with the opening of the fourth seal. The breaking of each seal reveals a new dimension about Jesus!

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1 Revelation 6:12–17

2 Revelation 19:11–16

3 Revelation 19:11

4 Revelation 19:15

5 Revelation 8:1

- Seal 1:** Salvation through Jesus—in contrast to the controlled salvation offered by the Church.
- Seal 2:** The supremacy of His Word, the Bible—not the supremacy of man’s word about Jesus.
- Seal 3:** The ministry of Jesus in heaven as judge—reveals Jesus’ ministry in heaven’s sanctuary.
- Seal 4:** The authority of Jesus over the earth—showing Jesus’ authority over the world.
- Seal 5:** The faith of Jesus in His people—revealing those who have the faith of Jesus.
- Seal 6:** The sovereignty of Jesus as King of Kings—revealing Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- Seal 7:** The deity of Jesus exposed—revealing that Jesus is equal to the Father.

While Jesus is revealed as deity in the seventh seal, He returns His sovereignty and kingdom to the Father after the revelation of the seventh seal.<sup>1</sup>

For now, we need to remember that the opening of each seal moves us chronologically toward the second coming and the momentous day of reckoning for all human beings at the end of the 1,000 years. Billions of people will sleep through the second coming because Jesus will not resurrect the wicked until the 1,000 years are ended. He will resurrect them to watch Him open the seventh seal. What a day that will be.

In the next chapter, we will study the impacts of the seals in more detail. You will see how the opening of the fourth seal marks the beginning of the judgment of the living.

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1 1 Corinthians 15:24–28





# The Seven Trumpets

The previous chapter focused on the seven seals. Because the seals are chronological, it is critically important that we establish when the opening of the seals began to identify their relationship to time. We learned how Daniel and Revelation harmoniously combine and bring us to the conclusion that 1798 was the year that Jesus received the book sealed with seven seals. The harmony of the sum of prophetic parts brings encouragement and enlightenment to students of prophecy.

The issue of the worthiness of Jesus as our High Priest also brings us to 1798. Remember, in the Old Testament, the high priest had to be found worthy and his sacrifice accepted *before* he could officiate on behalf of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

In our discussion of the seven seals, we learned that the opening of the first two seals occurred shortly after 1798 and the third seal opened in 1844. The first three seals set earth's stage for the next three seals. In addition, historical evidence confirms the operations conducted under the first three seals. The cumulative influence of the first three seals has been steadily growing around the world. We will discover in this lesson just how well the senior angels of the first three seals have done their work.

## The Fourth Seal

Carefully review the fourth seal: **“When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.”**<sup>2</sup>

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1 Leviticus 16

2 Revelation 6:7–8

The strongest internal evidence that the fourth seal is the next one to be opened is that the devastation described in this seal has not yet occurred since John saw this vision. The fourth seal indicates that 25% of the earth will be destroyed by four dreadful judgments. Why will Jesus open the fourth seal and send these four terrible judgments throughout the earth?

### **An Angry God?**

Today, there is much confusion in the world about God's character. The Devil has led many people to either hate or ignore God by misrepresenting His character. Even worse, the Devil has led most of the Protestant world to regard Jesus much like a heavenly Santa Claus. Many Christians are ignorant of Jesus' teachings which require obedience because they overemphasize Jesus' great compassion and mercy and diminish the legitimacy of God's Ten Commandments, many Christians are ignorant of Jesus' teachings which require obedience. As the bumper sticker says, "Jesus is either Lord over all or He's not Lord at all!"

Think about your character for a moment. Have you ever had someone misrepresent you to people who didn't know you? Even worse, has someone spread lies about you among those who knew you? How hard is it to overcome slanderous falsehoods?

The Bible declares that God is love. Divine love is the balance between justice and mercy. Jesus is all-merciful, and yet, He requires obedience and justice. He wants people to live as He lives. The prophet Micah wrote, "**He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly[a] with your God.**"<sup>1</sup>

The Bible tells us that Jesus is very capable of anger, and historically, His wrath has broken out upon individuals, cities, nations, and the world. Four Bible stories demonstrate His wrath toward:

- Individuals—Korah, Dathan, and Abiram<sup>2</sup>
- Cities—Sodom, and Gomorrah<sup>3</sup>

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1 Micah 6:8

2 Numbers 16

3 Genesis 19

- Nations—The Philistines<sup>1</sup>
- Earth—The Flood<sup>2</sup>

Each story illustrates an important truth. Jesus responds with anger and wrath when His mercy and patience no longer have a redeeming effect.

### **The Truth Hurts**

Satan is delighted when people believe that salvation comes by assumption. Many popular preachers and evangelists preach *Christ without the cross* and they consequently become popular. They excite multitudes with stories of powerful miracles, proclaim ecstatic messages about the power of Jesus, talk extensively about healing from sickness, and blessings that eliminate poverty. But few preachers clearly define sin and even fewer say that we can and must obtain victory over it. People don't like to have their sins pointed out. Think about it. Jesus' teachings would meet with the same rejection today as when He walked on the earth. When it comes to sin, the truth hurts now just like it did then.

We human beings have difficulty seeing our own faults. Even worse, many of us don't want to know our faults. Without a clear definition of sin, we can't appreciate or understand the malignancy of sin. By watering down the high standard of righteousness, Satan has led this and other nations into greater sin. Consequently, problems without solutions escalate.

We cannot appreciate salvation through Jesus without understanding the offensiveness and power of sin. Until we comprehend the magnitude of sin, we cannot appreciate the meaning of *being saved*. Until we admit our helplessness to overcome sin, we cannot appreciate Jesus' transforming power or our desperate need for His great love. Satan has cleverly worked through the large religious systems of the world to disguise sin. People do not understand what sin is or how to obtain victory over it. Thankfully, the everlasting gospel has the answer! This is another reason why the gospel must go to the world. It must expose the religious systems of the world for what they are.

The Devil has undermined the world's seven great religious systems to serve his purposes. For example:

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1 Joshua 5:13–6:27

2 Genesis 6–7

1. **Atheism** teaches there is no God. Man is the supreme being.
2. **Heathenism** is ignorant of the living God and creates its own god(s) as needed.
3. **Eastern Mysticism** teaches that man is immortal and can become God.
4. **Judaism** teaches that man is saved by obedience or compliance with the laws of God.
5. **Islam** teaches that man is saved through obedience to the teachings of Mohammed.
6. **Catholicism** teaches that man is saved through compliance with the teachings of the Church.
7. **Protestantism** generally teaches that man is saved by believing that he is saved.

These seven belief systems incorporate three false assumptions.

1. There is no salvation for there is no God.
2. Man saves himself through obedience.
3. Man is saved by assuming he is saved.

While the world's seven religious systems are built on false beliefs, God does have sincere people within each system. He claims those who live up to all they know to be right as His children. However, falsehoods, once assumed or accepted, lead people away from God's truth, and ultimately, people do terrible deeds in God's name. Jesus warned His disciples, "**They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.**"<sup>1</sup>

### Back to the Fourth Seal

Jesus has prepared a final test for the world to find out who loves Him *and* His truth. He has carefully planned it to determine our love for principles of righteousness. It will not be enough to be sincere and dedicated when He applies the test. Hitler was sincere and dedicated to his terrible ideas and the world suffered at his hands. TRUTH, not sincerity, is the most crucial element in life. Who loves and seeks for more of God's Truth? Who lives

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1 John 16:2-3

up to all the truth he knows? Who loves the truth of God so much that he would be willing to suffer or die for its sake?

John saw the saints struggling to defend truth at the end of the world. He says, **“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.”**<sup>1</sup> As he watched the war, John saw the suffering and martyrdom of the saints that occurs during the fifth seal. John was told, **“This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.”**<sup>2</sup>

In 1844, Jesus began judging the dead from the books of record. How will Jesus judge the living whose lives are still being lived at the end of the world? They will continue to make choices. Because the world is so diverse with languages, cultures, and religious beliefs, God has designed the judgment of the living in such a way that the living will choose their eternal destiny. As individuals make their decisions about the gospel, Jesus seals them eternally! Here’s a brief scenario.

Jesus sends His four dreadful judgments to awaken the earth to the sinfulness of its course. These four judgments<sup>3</sup> halt the indifference to the gospel so those who are living will hear the final gospel call. These four judgments are so extensive that every person on earth is forced to consider them. Because people do not understand the meaning of the judgments, they will be open to hear the everlasting gospel which explains the judgments. As people of earth contemplate the gospel, they will be invited to do what most have never done: yield their lives to the truth contained in God’s Word, the Bible. The gospel calls for obedience to the King of Kings. This is how the Bible becomes the center of a great controversy and why John contrasts the saints with the followers of the Devil. John says that the saints **“keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.”**<sup>4</sup> Satan, on the other hand, will make sure that circumstances will be so difficult that no one will be able to obey God’s commandments unless they are willing to live by faith. The saints will not be able to buy or sell. Salvation has always

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1 Revelation 12:17

2 Revelation 14:12

3 The judgments are also described in Ezekiel 14.

4 Revelation 14:12

come by faith and during the Great Tribulation, the saints will have the faith to obey God rather than men.<sup>1</sup>

### Trust and Obey

James saw the true relationship between obedience and faith. He says, **“You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. I will show you my faith by my deeds.”**<sup>2</sup>

So, what moves God to send judgments upon peoples and nations? Jesus said to Isaiah, **“See, the Lord is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants”**<sup>3</sup> **“The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The Lord has spoken this word. The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the earth. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth’s inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.”**<sup>4</sup>

Isaiah knew that people’s hearts were hard. He said, **“My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you. When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness. But when grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and do not regard the majesty of the Lord.”**<sup>5</sup>

### Jesus Upholds Mercy and Justice

Jesus holds each person accountable for his deeds. When people get away with murder, lying, stealing, and cheating, evil rapidly grows. The land becomes defiled. We can see the results in many cities today. Sin is like nuclear fission—once started, it can’t be stopped. The runaway result is that sin spreads until it controls or contaminates nearly every person. When people, cities, nations, or even the world reaches a point when love has no redeeming effect, Jesus sets His mercy aside and steps in with redeeming

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1 Acts 4:19

2 James 2:24, 18

3 Isaiah 24:1

4 Isaiah 24:3–6

5 Isaiah 26:9–10

judgments. He sends these judgments to arouse people with the sinfulness of their course.

Ezekiel 14 gives a very clear explanation of the four judgments used in the fourth seal. **“The word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its people and their animals, even if these three men—Noah, Daniel and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign Lord.’”**<sup>1</sup>

**“Or if I send wild beasts through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the beasts.”**<sup>2</sup> **“Or if I bring a sword against that country and say, ‘Let the sword pass throughout the land.’”**<sup>3</sup> **“Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out my wrath on it through bloodshed, killing its people and their animals,”**<sup>4</sup> **“How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments—sword and famine and wild beasts and plague—to kill its men and their animals! Yet there will be some survivors—sons and daughters who will be brought out of it. They will come to you, and when you see their conduct and their actions, you will be consoled regarding the disaster I have brought on Jerusalem—every disaster I have brought on it.”**<sup>5</sup> **“For you will know that I have done nothing in it without cause.”**<sup>6</sup>

Hosea prophesied, **“The days of punishment are coming, the days of reckoning are at hand . . . because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person a maniac.”**<sup>7</sup>

God warned the Israelites through Moses, **“If you obey the Lord your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written,”**<sup>8</sup> **“The Lord**

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1 Ezekiel 14:12–14

2 Ezekiel 14:15

3 Ezekiel 14:17

4 Ezekiel 14:19

5 Ezekiel 14:21–22

6 Ezekiel 14:23

7 Hosea 9:7

8 Deuteronomy 30:10

thy God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.”<sup>1</sup> “But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them . . . you will certainly be destroyed.”<sup>2</sup>

### Warnings in the New Testament

If you think that the above warnings only occurred in Old Testament days, consider these warnings from the New Testament.

Peter said, “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, [the Greek word translated hell is “tartarus”—the Greek equivalent to the bottomless pit], putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of *what is going to happen* to the ungodly,”<sup>3</sup> “The Lord knows how to rescue godly men and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment.”<sup>4</sup>

John wrote in Revelation, “Come out of her [Babylon], 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.”<sup>5</sup> “Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.”<sup>6</sup>

John also wrote, “I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God’s wrath is completed.”<sup>7</sup>

God has sent and will send judgments on the world either to save or to punish. In the case of corporate judgments (judgments on *groups of people*), God extended mercy to those who would turn from wrong. In Noah’s day,

1 Deuteronomy 30:16

2 Deuteronomy 30:17–18

3 2 Peter 2:4–6

4 2 Peter 2:9

5 Revelation 18:4–5

6 Revelation 18:8

7 Revelation 15:1

the door was open to whoever would get on board the ark. In Sodom and Gomorrah, God couldn't find 10 righteous people, but He did save Lot and some of his family. In Jericho, God saved the prostitute Rahab and her family. In Nineveh, when the people repented, God saved the entire city.

While cities, nations, and earth itself may fill their cups of iniquity, God seeks to save those who love Him and spare them from His judgments. “[Jesus] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance!”<sup>1</sup> This is divine mercy.

God also sends judgments on *individuals* when their wicked acts take them beyond redeeming love. There is a time of NO return when divine mercy is no longer available. We can call it the point of no return, the unpardonable sin, or the close of probation (mercy). A single person, the people of a city, a nation, and even the entire world's population can commit the unpardonable sin and then, destruction follows.

Consider this interesting verse. **“Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.”**<sup>2</sup>

The context of this verse relates to the seven last plagues which are yet future. An angel has just poured out the third of the seven *last* plagues on earth. The angels, who have impartially observed human conduct, declare God to be true and righteous for having punished humans in this manner. “This is divine justice,” the angel proclaims. This verse demonstrates that the balance between divine mercy and divine justice is divine love. This is a hard concept to understand. How can God be all merciful, all-forgiving, and yet execute punishment?

### Reasons for Judgments

God does not take pleasure in divine judgments. The Bible describes them as His strange work.<sup>3</sup> God sends punishment on people or nations because He tries to bring evildoers to repentance through warnings. Unfortunately, if His warnings go unheeded, He sends destruction to awaken evildoers. If they defiantly refuse to turn from their evil, they reach a point

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1 2 Peter 3:9

2 Revelation 16:5–6

3 Isaiah 28:21

when mercy is no longer meaningful. In fact, extended mercy only allows evil, violence, and suffering to continue needlessly.

Some Christians argue that the God of the Old Testament is not the same God described in the New Testament. This is not true. Jesus is always the same—yesterday, today, and tomorrow.<sup>1</sup> He is long-suffering, yet when God cast Satan and his angels from heaven,<sup>2</sup> Jesus demonstrated that even in heaven there is a time when mercy becomes meaningless and justice must prevail.

Satan would have us misunderstand God's love. He would have us picture God as either a vengeful tyrant who zaps those who disagree with Him or a God who does not concern himself with our sins. Both concepts are wrong. The first concept is the foundation of the doctrine of an eternally burning hell. The second concept is the basis for amoral and decadent behavior. Those who understand that they will meet their Maker to give account for their deeds are careful with their actions. Jesus warned, **“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”**<sup>3</sup>

God also sends judgment on earth to catch man's attention, because we forget God. We forget He owns the universe and that He means exactly what He says. Satan leads the world to distort or magnify God's patience incorrectly. We take His longsuffering for granted and sinners become bold in their acts of sin.<sup>4</sup> We may forget or even deny that judgments and justice eventually come, but the Bible record is clear. The fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jericho, and the people who lived before the Flood prove that God acts when violence and sin reach an intolerable level.

### **The Time of Wrath**

The final test of mankind involves a time of great tribulation. Jesus spoke to His disciples about the magnitude of these judgments at the end of the world. He said, **“For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world—and never to be equaled again.”**<sup>5</sup> The time of

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1 Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 1:10–12

2 Ezekiel 28:14–17, Revelation 12:7, 9

3 Matthew 10:28

4 Ecclesiastes 8:11; Zephaniah 1:12

5 Matthew 24:21

trouble grows in intensity. The seven last plagues create tribulation beyond our comprehension. Daniel said, **“There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.”**<sup>1</sup> The book of Revelation predicts and describes the coming events that comprise the Great Tribulation. We do not have to guess what the trouble is or why it comes. The global trouble will begin when Jesus opens the fourth seal and sends the fourth living creature to earth with His four judgments: sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts. A global earthquake marks the opening of the fourth seal which will begin when the censer in Revelation 8:2–5 is hurled on the earth. Then, the seven first plagues—the trumpets—will commence. The seven first plagues are followed by seven last plagues so there are a total of 14 plagues. Each plague has a special purpose and meaning.

Before we examine the contents of the seven trumpets, we need to understand that the short time between the fourth seal and the sixth seal is appropriately called, the *time of wrath*. Remember, Gabriel said to Daniel, **“I am going to tell you what will happen later in the *time of wrath*, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end.”**<sup>2</sup> On a later visit with Daniel, Gabriel told Daniel that Satan would appear in person upon earth! He said, **“The king [Satan] will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.”**<sup>3</sup>

Daniel mentioned the time of wrath two times and John saw it too. Compare Daniel’s verses with Revelation 15:1 in which John wrote, **“I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God’s wrath is completed.”** In other words, God’s wrath ends with the seven last plagues!

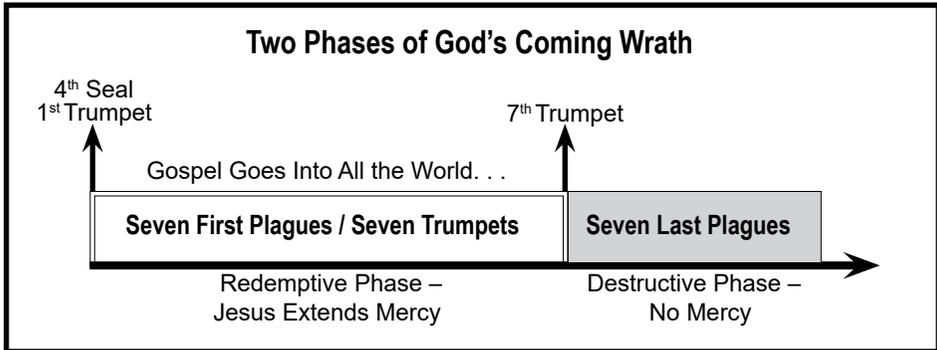
Study the chart on the following page and notice that the trumpets mark a period of redemptive judgments because mercy is mixed with them. The purpose of the trumpets is to awaken and arouse people to the sinfulness of their course, and to prepare them for the close of mercy.

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1 Daniel 12:1

2 Daniel 8:19

3 Daniel 11:36



### Trumpets—End of Probation

The time period of the seven trumpets marks the judgment of the living. Remember, the Day of Atonement was the most important day in the Jewish year because the 10th day of the seventh month marked the close of Israel's judgment for that year.

The Feast of Trumpets began nine days earlier—on the first day of the seventh month—to warn the Jews of the Day of Atonement, the final and most important day of the year.<sup>1</sup> Each day of the Feast of Trumpets, according to Jewish records, trumpets sounded throughout the camp announcing the closing of mercy. On the 10th day, the actual Day of Atonement, the trumpet sounded throughout the land<sup>2</sup> to signify that probation had ended.

The close of judgment was not a surprise in the wilderness and it won't be a surprise to those living upon earth. In fact, Jesus wants the close of probation to come with ample warning so that His people desiring eternal life can make all necessary preparations.

### A Clarion Call

The Bible often describes the trumpet as a symbol of warning or announcement.

**“Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand.”<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 23:24

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 25:9

<sup>3</sup> Joel 2:1

**“I appointed watchmen over you and said ‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’ . . . I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not listened to my words and have rejected my law.”<sup>1</sup>**

**“If anyone hears the trumpet but does not heed the warning and the sword comes and takes their life, their blood will be on their own head.”<sup>2</sup>**

When Jesus returns, He will use a trumpet to announce His appearing. **“For the trumpet will sound, the dead [God’s people] will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”<sup>3</sup>**

Since ancient times, the trumpet has been an instrument of music and a means of communication. Generals in battle directed their armies with trumpets. The trumpet was ideal because its penetrating sound could rise above the din of war or pierce the dark of night. Night watchmen were required to sound a trumpet if the enemy approached. Specific tunes were used to indicate assignment and signals. The apostle Paul says: **“If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?”<sup>4</sup>**

The sounding of the seven trumpets of Revelation will be a clarion call. They are symbols of warning or announcement. Their purpose is to awaken the world that Jesus is about to appear. Their message is, “Get ready! Get ready! Get ready!” Since the trumpet is one of the loudest musical instruments and the number seven is usually considered to be a complete number, these trumpets have global application. After all, God wants to awaken and arouse all people of earth that Jesus is coming back to gather those whose names are written in the Book of Life.

God has designed the trumpets to capture the world’s attention so everyone will hear the gospel. Today, people have a limited understanding of the word *gospel*; they only comprehend a portion of the full gospel. Jesus said when everyone has heard the gospel of the kingdom, **“Then the end will come.”<sup>5</sup>** The complete gospel story hasn’t been made known because the everlasting gospel accompanies the revelation of Jesus. The full gospel

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1 Jeremiah 6:17, 19

2 Ezekiel 33:4

3 1 Corinthians 15:52

4 1 Corinthians 14:8

5 Matthew 24:14

incorporates the trumpets, the seals, the seven last plagues, and the four beasts of Revelation. Because truth is constantly unfolding, the gospel continues to develop even though the principles of the gospel remain unchanged. Salvation has always come through faith in God. Love for God and our fellow man is the foundation of the gospel. God proves that He can restore His image in fallen man by showing the transformation of every individual who is under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

John saw that the remnant would have to give the gospel to the world *again*.<sup>1</sup> The reason the gospel must go again throughout the world is that in its final form, the gospel contains a special message that is not applicable at any other time in earth's history. This timely message explains the purpose of the trumpets and it contains a call to worship the living God. This call includes a very important test that affects the whole world. The final gospel will separate those who really love God from those who hate the light of truth. Those who are now living up to all the light they have will rejoice and move forward with the greater light of the complete gospel that will soon light up every corner of the world.

### **Global Awakening**

Jesus has sent judgments upon the world in the past. Judgments from heaven come with warning. Jesus uses judgments to awaken and arouse people to the sinfulness of their course. His judgments can be redemptive or punitive—a means of salvation or destruction.

The opening of the fourth seal marks the beginning of the tribulation that is coming to earth. At the close of mercy, an even greater tribulation comes upon the earth in the form of seven last plagues.<sup>2</sup>

The effects of the seven trumpets will be worldwide. The awakening will be unlike anything ever seen on earth. People of earth are about to be suddenly awakened to hear an extremely sobering message. The Devil is preparing to use these events to his advantage. It's going to be a most traumatic time.

### **The End of Corporate Intercession**

**“And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. Another angel, who had a golden censer, came**

1 Revelation 10:8–11

2 Daniel 12:1

and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them."<sup>1</sup>

This verse includes two important elements: chronological sequence and the incense from the altar. Notice that the seven angels who serve God were given seven trumpets;<sup>2</sup> THEN the angel at the golden Altar of Incense hurled a censer down to earth; THEN on earth there were thunder, rumblings, lightning, and an earthquake; and THEN the seven angels prepared to sound their trumpets. The verse also states that BEFORE the trumpets sounded, the angel at the altar placed a lot of incense on the altar.

Remember, the fourth seal and the trumpets begin at the same time. The primary purpose of the fourth seal is to reveal Jesus' authority. This revelation exposes our accountability to His authority. The primary purpose of the seven trumpets is to awaken the world's people so they will listen to the everlasting gospel. Each religious system and church has their own authority and center for doctrine. For this reason, Baptists don't listen to Methodists, and Jehovah's Witnesses don't pay any attention to Mormons. When the angel casts the censer down, Jesus will overrule all religious processes. The throwing down of the censer and the commotion that follows on earth simultaneously mark the **beginning** of the trumpet sequence and the **end** of the atonement process in heaven. This will quickly get people's attention.

When the angel throws the censer of Revelation 8:2–5 down, it symbolizes the end of God's patience with nations—not individuals—of the world. In ancient times, God's patience with the existence of sin was expressed through the *daily* or *continual* offering. Each morning and evening, a priest offered a sacrifice on the Altar of Burnt Offering. The priest offered this sacrifice on behalf of the *nation* of Israel and not for a particular individual. In other words, this sacrifice was a corporate sacrifice for the nation.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Revelation 8:2–6

2 Compare with Revelation 1:20.

3 Numbers 15:22–31 and Leviticus 4 describe the difference between corporate and individual sacrifices.

In Israel's day, the morning and evening sacrifices provided corporate atonement on a continual or daily basis. This atonement was necessary so Israel could dwell in God's consuming presence. God requires full atonement for every sin. Without the morning and evening atonement, the nation of Israel could not exist! Jesus has been interceding in heaven on behalf of the world. Jesus, through His daily or continual intercession, has sheltered our guilty world from the righteous justice of almighty God. Just before the seven trumpets begin, the angel will throw the censer in heaven down indicating the sudden end of corporate intercession. A sinful and defiled world will suddenly and unexpectedly reap the deserving wrath of God. As in the days of Noah, the earth, corporately, will reach a point of no return. When that decisive moment is reached, the fourth seal will be opened, followed by a global earthquake. Then, the trumpets begin, signifying the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The Great Tribulation will mark the end of the world. Daniel 8 and 11 refer to this time period as a *time of wrath*. The events during the seven trumpets reveal why the time of the trumpets is indeed a time of God's wrath.

### Events as Each Trumpet Sounds

1. John saw a meteoric shower of burning hail mixed with blood, probably of men and beasts. One-third of the earth, trees, and all the green grass are burned up.<sup>1</sup>
2. John saw a rock as big as a mountain strike the sea. One-third of the sea turns to blood, one-third of the sea creatures die, and one-third of the ships are destroyed.<sup>2</sup>
3. A flaming star impacts a continent. One-third of the rivers and the springs of water turn bitter, and many people die from drinking the water. The name of this plague is *Wormwood* or bitterness.<sup>3</sup>
4. John saw one-third of the sun, moon, and stars struck, and they turned dark. One-third of the day is without light as well as one-third of the night.<sup>4</sup>
5. Satan, the angel king of the bottomless pit is released. For five months, he brings a terrible affliction on those who are rebelling against God.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Revelation 8:7

2 Revelation 8:8–9

3 Revelation 8:10–11

4 Revelation 8:12

5 Revelation 9:1–5

The torment is so bad that **“people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.”**<sup>1</sup>

6. Satan conducts a global war to conquer the world. Four angels hold back the war until the very hour, day, month, and year arrive. Satan will cause one-third of the remaining population to be killed. The number of troops will be 200,000,000.<sup>2</sup>
7. Jesus concludes His special work in the heavenly sanctuary. There is an earthquake, lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great hail-storm.<sup>3</sup>

These seven warning plagues (trumpets) fall in response to our unrestrained evil and hardness of heart. **“Why has the Lord decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the Lord our God?”**<sup>4</sup> **“[Your] houses are full of deceit; [you] have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek. [Your] evil deeds have no limit.”**<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the opening of the fourth seal will cause everyone to recognize that God’s wrath has arisen on earth. These trumpet plagues will not be manmade; rather, individuals will know they are *Acts of God*. As in the days of Pharaoh, God says, and the world will know, that **“I am the Lord”**<sup>6</sup> that do these things.

The first four trumpets will be warning judgments God sends to the world saying, “Get ready, get ready. Prepare to meet your Maker.” The last three trumpets will be curses that God sends against specific groups of people. Keep in mind that during the trumpets, God’s hand is stretched out to save those who want to be saved.

### **Much Incense**

The angel at heaven’s altar was given much incense to put on the altar before the seven trumpets sounded. The fragrance of the incense along with the prayers of the saints go up before God. In the wilderness sanctuary, the

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1 Revelation 9:6

2 Revelation 9:13–19

3 Revelation 11:15–19

4 Jeremiah 16:10

5 Jeremiah 5:27–28

6 Exodus 7:5

priest offered a special incense before the Lord each morning and evening during the daily sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> On the Day of Atonement, the high priest carried a censer full of burning coals with two handfuls of this incense into the Most Holy Place. Jesus said, **“He [the high priest] is to put the incense on the fire before the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover [the mercy seat on top of the ark] above the tablets of the covenant law, so that he will not die.”**<sup>2</sup> Only a thin veil of smoke separated the high priest from God’s consuming glory.

From Revelation 8:5, we conclude that angel throws the censer down because its usefulness is finished. The daily corporate atonement conducted with this censer is ended. Then, the angel adds extra incense to the fire on the altar to sustain the atonement period a little longer than usual. This is necessary for the living are about to be judged. The prayers of the saints come before the Lord along with the fragrance of the incense because the saints are knowledgeable and prepared for the hour of trial that is about to occur. The saints will be a body of people on earth anticipating the trumpets. They know it is time for Jesus to begin His judgment. Jesus will first judge those who have had an opportunity to know and prepare for these trumpet events.<sup>3</sup>

### The First Three Trumpets

**“The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water—the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.”**<sup>4</sup>

I believe the first three trumpets will be meteors and asteroids impacting the earth. God is going to shake the heavens! Scientists have known about

1 Exodus 30:7, 8, 37

2 Leviticus 16:13

3 1 Peter 4:17

4 Revelation 8:7–11

the threatening presence of meteors and asteroids for many years. Millions of chunks of cosmic debris travel through space. In fact, the rings around the planet Saturn are made of ice and space debris. Some pieces can range in size from a golf ball to several miles in diameter.

In the early 1980s, few geoscientists and geologists understood that large asteroids had hit the earth. At the annual meeting of the American Geophysical Union in December 1989, Dr. Clark Chapman of the Planetary Science Institute in Tucson, Arizona, and Dr. David Morrison, chief of space science at NASA's Ames Research Center in Mountain View, California shocked their audience of 4,000 scientists by suggesting "the risk of death from a wandering asteroid from outer space is somewhat greater than the risk of an individual American dying in an airplane crash." Their calculations were based on the fact that more than 100 major meteors have recently impacted the surface of the moon. In March of 1989, a half-mile-wide asteroid came within 500,000 miles of earth. If it had hit the earth, astronomers said, "It would have crashed with enough violence to destroy a good-sized country." Scientists have now identified 190 confirmed meteor or comet impact structures on earth.

John's description of the first trumpet is a hailstorm, not of ice, but of fire. This fire burns up a third of the land and trees and all the green grass! Because the next two trumpets are caused by large meteors, I believe the first trumpet will be caused by many cosmic fragments, such as baseball-sized meteors, which will enter our atmosphere, impact the earth, and cause fires all around the world. The debris field from a comet passing earth could cause this fiery hailstorm. Men will be powerless to stop the fires scattered in many locations. The death and destruction described in this trumpet cannot be stopped.

When the second angel sounds his trumpet, John saw a large meteor, perhaps a mile or two in diameter, hit the sea. The resulting tidal wave destroys a third of the ships on the ocean—not to mention seaports! The intense heat of the meteor vaporizes the oxygen in the water and destroys a third of the marine life in the area. Perhaps the "blood" John saw is the red tide or red algae that thrives in deoxygenated water.

When the third angel sounds his trumpet, a large meteor hits a continent or land mass. Perhaps an instantaneous series of ground waves and earthquakes will follow to redistribute tectonic forces beneath the surface of

the earth. The *shaking* of the ground from the movement of huge tectonic plates collapses thousands of water wells that provide the survivors drinking water. What drinking water is available would likely be contaminated by sewage, refuse, and toxic waste that has been buried in the ground. Many people will die from drinking the water.

Note that each of the first three trumpets affects 1/3 of what it falls on. If we add the 1/3 portions of each trumpet, this could mean that the first three trumpets will affect 3/3 or all of the earth. This would be consistent with the idea that all the world must be awakened to hear the gospel message. We don't know just how God represented the earth to John in this vision. Maybe 1/3 of the area he was viewing was affected, or perhaps 1/3 of the total earth will be affected. Either way, the result of the first three trumpets is catastrophic.

Fifty years ago, most scientists did not accept the theory that meteorites or asteroids impacted the earth, causing mass extinctions. However, in the face of overwhelming evidence, they have become quite confident that large meteors have impacted the earth in the past and they theorize that dinosaurs became extinct because of them. There is no question that very large meteors have impacted this planet in the past. Many craters on the earth and moon clearly indicate such impacts. The largest impact crater in North America is about 18 miles wide located in Manson, Iowa. What is so ironic is that while scientists are studying the past, the Bible predicts mass extinctions in the **future** in this very same fashion!

### **The Fourth Trumpet**

**“The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.”<sup>1</sup>**

This trumpet obviously marks a phenomenal event in the heavens. John did not describe the cause of this event, but the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars might be a result of the previous three trumpets. A more likely cause would be a chain of enormous volcano eruptions in response to the shift in tectonic plates from the third trumpet. With the sun darkened, vegetation would become stunted. Food crops which were destroyed from the fires in

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1 Revelation 8:12

the first trumpet, could not recover. The prospects of life on earth after the first four trumpets will be questionable. This is God's primary purpose. He wants to see who will trust in Him even though the heavens fall.

As people of earth witness these terribly awesome events, they will be desperate about survival. In their suffering, they will seek the meaning of these disasters. Clearly, these calamities are *acts of God*. Each person, regardless of race, creed, color, or religious belief, will be alarmed and searching for answers. As people begin to hear about the first four trumpets of Revelation, the truthfulness and meaning of Revelation's story will quickly blossom. Thus, God will reach the minds of people everywhere. They will listen to a prophetic explanation of what these events are all about. Millions all over the world will be anxious to hear the everlasting gospel.

### Three Curses

The next three trumpets are even more painful. John said, **“As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: ‘Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!’”**<sup>1</sup> This eagle is the fourth living creature John saw earlier.<sup>2</sup> This living creature announced that the next three trumpets are curses or woes. Instead of falling on the physical elements of earth, the three woes directly fall on specific groups of people.

### The Fifth Trumpet

The first woe is the fifth trumpet which marks the physical appearance of Satan. He will claim to be God and is the *angel king* of the Abyss. Notice John's description:

**“The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they**

1 Revelation 8:13

2 Revelation 4:7

suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails with stingers, 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, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer). The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.”<sup>1</sup>

The language of this trumpet is generally analogous, not literal or symbolic. John best described the creatures he saw with analogies of his own or with analogies used by Old Testament writers. You can understand the meaning of this trumpet by comparing it to Joel 2, for Joel saw a very similar scene. The difference between Joel and John is that John saw the coming of Satan (the angel king from the Abyss) while Joel saw the coming of the Lord! Notice Joel's remarks:

**“Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand—a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come. Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste—nothing escapes them. They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountaintops, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle. At the sight of them, nations are in anguish; every face turns pale. They charge like warriors; they scale walls like soldiers. They all march in line, not swerving from their course. They do not jostle each other; each marches straight ahead. They plunge through defenses without breaking ranks. They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows. Before them the earth shakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his**

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1 Revelation 9:1–12

forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obey his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?”<sup>1</sup>

### Compare Their Views

- Joel and John saw a great army of locusts that looked like horses.
- Joel and John saw the sun and moon darkened.
- Joel and John marveled at the power of the army.
- Joel saw the Lord at the head of His army. John saw the angel king of the Abyss at the head of his army.

Two important facts regarding the appearing of Satan connect:

1. Satan is released from the Abyss (spirit world) in Revelation 9 and is returned to the Abyss in Revelation 20. **“And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss and locked and sealed it over him.”**<sup>2</sup>
2. From the fifth trumpet, we learn that Satan is allowed to come out of the Abyss and physically appear on earth. However, God will prevent Satan from harming anyone other than those who are not sealed. **“They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months.”**<sup>3</sup> These verses state that Satan and his angels cannot harm the physical elements of earth that have already been hurt during the first trumpet.

Satan and his angels torment the wicked to make the world violently angry with the Two Witnesses and their followers.

### Two Witnesses With Great Power

We will study the Two Witnesses in our next chapter. For now, we need only to understand that they are God’s representatives on earth during the trumpets. They will have supernatural capabilities, and the earth is afraid

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1 Joel 2:1–11

2 Revelation 20:1–3

3 Revelation 9:4–5

of them! John says, **“If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.”**<sup>1</sup>

So, after appearing upon earth, Satan torments the wicked beyond what the Two Witnesses have already done and lays the blame upon God’s representatives. Thus, the world becomes even more *enraged* with the Two Witnesses and their followers. Ultimately, the wicked conclude that God’s people must be destroyed.

### **The Beast From the Abyss**

An *angel king* comes out of the Abyss only once in Revelation’s story, but a *beast* comes out of the Abyss two times. Since Revelation 12:9 tells us that the dragon-like beast is a fallen angel called Satan, the *angel king* who ascends from the Abyss in Revelation 9 must be the Devil. After all, the Devil is a fallen star. When we compare Joel’s account of the second coming with the appearing of the *angel king* from the Abyss, we can conclude that Satan is the angel king.

The following verses describe the actions of the beast from the Abyss. **“Now when they [the Two Witnesses] have finished their testimony, *the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.*”**<sup>2</sup>

**“The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast.”**<sup>3</sup>

When Satan appears on earth claiming to be God, everyone except His people will be astonished. He will nearly deceive the entire world with his miracles and great supernatural powers. Eventually, Satan will *kill* the effectiveness of God’s representatives by appearing to be so powerful and so much greater than those representing God’s cause. Each person will have to

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1 Revelation 11:5–6

2 Revelation 11:7

3 Revelation 17:8

make a difficult decision—follow Jesus’ teachings and receive Satan’s wrath or obey Satan’s commands (claiming to be God) and receive God’s wrath.

Revelation 17:8 states that those whose names *are not* written in the Book of Life will be astonished when Satan appears, but the saints will be expecting him. After all, the fifth trumpet tells us when he will appear.

### **The Sixth Trumpet**

The second woe is a great war. John wrote, **“The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’ And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.”**<sup>1</sup> **“The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.”**<sup>2</sup>

This trumpet describes a great war in which Satan leads his deceived followers. Satan sets out to establish a one-world government and he succeeds for a short time. Satan will overcome all political opposition and crush those who obey God’s commandments. Satan, claiming to be God, will sit on a throne as King of kings over the kings of earth, and Lord of lords over the religious systems of earth. He will rule the world through deception and force. Daniel saw the conclusion of this great war in his vision.<sup>3</sup> Satan

1 Revelation 9:13–21

2 Revelation 11:14

3 Daniel 11:21–45

will temporarily win. The war under the sixth trumpet, like all wars, forces everyone to take sides. At the close of the sixth trumpet, the whole world will be in two camps: those obeying Satan and those obeying Jesus!

### **The Seventh/Final Trumpet**

When everyone has made a decision, salvation will be closed. John wrote, **“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.’**

**“And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people and those who revere your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth.’ 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.”<sup>1</sup>**

This trumpet will announce the close of salvation. At this time, God has extended His mercy as long as possible, and each person has made a decision for or against the gospel. Those who side with Satan will receive his mark—a mark necessary to conduct business, a physical permit to buy and sell. Those who side with the gospel will appear frail, weak, and helpless against the Devil and his forces. The saints will not be able to buy or sell. All forms of life-support will be cut off. Satan will remove every means of earthly survival from them. In fact, during the sixth plague (that is, the 13th event of all 14 first and last plagues) the Devil will lead the world in a united effort to exterminate the saints with a universal death decree.

Do not think the story of persecution is one-sided. Jesus will deal with the Devil. **“It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”<sup>2</sup>** Jesus will break apart the consolidated powers of Satan by sending seven last plagues on him and his followers. Whereas the first two woes were single

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1 Revelation 11:15–19

2 Hebrews 10:31

events, the last woe contains the seven last plagues. The awful and terrible plagues containing the full fury of God’s wrath will fall on all who receive the number or the name of the Devil.

**Seven Trumpets Parallel Seven Last Plagues**

There are some obvious comparisons between the trumpets and the plagues.

	<b>Seven Trumpets (First Plagues)</b>	<b>Seven Bowls (Last Plagues)</b>
1.	Hail, fire, and blood on one-third of earth	Terrible sores on all who rebel against God
2.	One-third of the sea turns to blood	Sea turns to blood—everything in it dies
3.	One-third of the drinking water becomes bitter	Drinking water and rivers turn to blood
4.	Sun, moon, and stars affected (one-third of heaven struck)	Sun scorches people with intense heat
5.	Satan appears—bringing affliction on the wicked	Great affliction on the government of Antichrist
6.	Great war—millions killed	Final war on the saints—Armageddon
7.	Hailstorm, earthquake	Great hailstorm, earthquake, and final destruction of earth

The parallel is important in this respect. The trumpets (seven first plagues) are a taste of what the seven last plagues will be. The essential difference between these two groups of plagues is God’s mercy. During the trumpets, there is mercy. A person can turn from their rebellion against God and be saved. During the seven last plagues, there is no mercy. The wrath of God will fall full force on the wicked.

Those who keep God’s commandments and remain faithful (faith-full) to Jesus during the great tribulation will live by this precious promise: **“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare**

and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. 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.

“If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.”<sup>1</sup>

### God’s Wrath Displayed

The seven trumpets will suddenly and unexpectedly overwhelm most people on earth. The meteoric impacts will compel everyone to listen to the everlasting gospel. Outside the context of such dramatic events, the gospel has little momentum among earth’s billions of people. So, the primary purpose of the trumpets is to reveal true salvation. Revelation’s story will come into sharp focus when the trumpets begin because people all over the world will seriously investigate the events taking place right before their eyes. Thus, the full gospel will go to the ends of the earth during a very short period.

One final point, the trumpets are *samples* of God’s wrath. The seven trumpets are followed by seven last plagues that are much more destructive. The severity of the trumpets will cause every human being to carefully consider the warning message contained in the everlasting gospel.

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1 Psalm 91:1–10



# The 144,000 and Two Witnesses

With the seven trumpets, Jesus will awaken the world using dramatic events from the heavens. This will draw attention to the gospel story so that it can go to every nation, kindred, and tongue in a short period. Notice the words of Jesus, **“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”**<sup>1</sup>

The phrase **“as a testimony to all nations”** in the NIV is translated **“for a witness unto all nations”** in the KJV. The gospel is a witness or a testimony that either saves or condemns. The gospel offers salvation to those who receive it and condemns those who reject it! Jesus told Nicodemus, **“Whoever believes in him [the Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”**<sup>2</sup>

The gospel of Jesus is polemical. The word polemical means *opposite* or *poles apart*. Jesus said, **“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”**<sup>3</sup> The power and clarity of the gospel during the time of the trumpets will be greater than anything the world has ever witnessed. John says the entire world will be enlightened with the full gospel message. This message exposes the false or fallen teachings of Babylon. John saw a messenger from heaven bearing a powerful message. **“After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his**

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1 Matthew 24:14

2 John 3:18–19

3 Matthew 10:34

splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!’”<sup>1</sup>

### A Trumpet in One Ear—The Gospel in the Other

Revelation identifies a special group worthy to present the Plan of Salvation to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people during earth’s final hours. People have wondered about the 144,000 ever since John wrote about them. Who are the 144,000? What do they do? Why are they so special in Revelation’s story? Some denominations believe the 144,000 are the only ones saved at the second coming. Others believe the 144,000 are converted Jews who proclaim the gospel to all the world during the tribulation before Jesus comes. Some people believe the number 144,000 is symbolic and does not represent a literal count or number, instead, a representation of the believers who will be redeemed.

The Bible answers all these questions after some careful investigation. In Revelation, we learn seven important points concerning the 144,000.

#### Point 1

The 144,000 are selected and sealed *prior* to the sounding of the seven trumpets and the opening of the fourth seal. **“After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ‘Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.’ Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.”**<sup>2</sup> The angels hold the four winds (the terrible judgments of sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts contained in the fourth seal) until the 144,000 are sealed. In other words, Jesus delays the opening of the fourth seal until He selects the 144,000. Then the angels with the seven trumpets begin their work. The first four angels of the seven trumpets harm the physical elements of earth. Specifically, the first two angels have the power to harm the land, trees, and sea.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Revelation 18:1–2

2 Revelation 7:1–4

3 Revelation 8:7–8

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**Point 2**

The 144,000 come from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. These cannot be the literal tribes of Israel today because literal Israel failed at the end of its 490-year probationary period in AD 33 and Jesus gave the gospel to the Christians. The Jews are not going to receive the gospel commission during a future period of seven years, because the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel 9 followed the 69<sup>th</sup> week and occurred between AD 27 and AD 33. Later, the gospel commission was taken from the Christian faith and passed on to Protestants in 1798. A true remnant of Israel remains; that is, true Israel belongs to Christ. Paul wrote, **“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”**<sup>1</sup> This is why Paul says, **“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.”**<sup>2</sup> Finally, **“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”**<sup>3</sup>

Through the years, many Bible students have discussed the origin and identity of the 144,000. Some religious groups are certain that the 144,000 come from their denomination since they claim to possess all of God’s *truth*. We can learn more about the identity of the 144,000 by drawing a comparison from the book of Numbers. When Israel was about to cross over to the Promised Land, they took a census of men 20 years and older, and the tribes totaled approximately 603,000 men.<sup>4</sup> At that time, Israel failed to enter the Promised Land because the spies gave a discouraging report. When Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land 38 years later, they took another census. This time the number of men 20 years and older was about 624,000. The second census included Levites who were not counted in the earlier census.<sup>5</sup>

A parallel exists in Revelation’s story. Before the people of God enter the heavenly Promised Land, God assures the saints that He will select 12,000 from each tribe as firstfruits or choice specimens. This means that each of the 12 groups of people will have 12,000 glorious representatives.

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1 Galatians 3:29

2 Romans 10:12

3 Galatians 3:28

4 Numbers 2

5 Numbers 26:51, 62

The beauty of this process is that when the Israel of God is redeemed at the second coming, it will be a numberless multitude!<sup>1</sup> The number of people that make up spiritual Israel will be like the sands of the sea, but the 144,000 will be the ones who gather the great multitude together during the time of the trumpets.

The apostle Paul described the true Israel that will be saved when he wrote, **“A person is a Jew who is one inwardly.”**<sup>2</sup> **“For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”**<sup>3</sup> Paul’s identification of God’s *chosen people* harmonizes with John’s remarks on the saint’s identity. He says, **“Those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus,”**<sup>4</sup> and **“The people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.”**<sup>5</sup>

Today, people normally interpret the word, Jew, as meaning a race or nation. However, the original meaning of the word refers to *those chosen or selected*. James, the author of the New Testament book bearing his name, understood this literal meaning. He addressed his book to early Christians suffering from persecution by saying, **“To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations.”**<sup>6</sup> James was not referring to the Jewish race, but to those early Christians who had fled because of persecution. Peter also wrote in his epistle about the concept of being chosen when he wrote, **“To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”**<sup>7</sup>

After Jesus ascended, the Jews and Romans severely persecuted His followers. Historians believe 8 of the 12 apostles were either crucified or beaten to death. After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, they persecuted Christians for three more centuries. The Romans intensely hated the Christians because they preached a divisive doctrine, refusing to wor-

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1 Revelation 7:9

2 Romans 2:29

3 Romans 2:13

4 Revelation 12:17

5 Revelation 14:12

6 James 1:1

7 1 Peter 1:1–2

ship the Roman emperor. This persecution scattered Christians all over the world. When James and Peter penned their epistles, they clearly addressed them to their brothers who were suffering persecution.

### Point 3

As each of Jacob's 12 sons was different and unique, each of the 12 tribes represents a unique character and experience in knowing, loving, and serving God.<sup>1</sup> Jesus has evidently created 12 varieties of people and He appreciates the unique makeup of each type of person. I believe that when we receive Jesus as our personal Savior, we are joined to one of the 12 tribes of Israel by our personality type and experience in the Lord.

### Point 4

John describes the characters of the 144,000, **“These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.”**<sup>2</sup>

What a statement. They kept themselves pure! **“No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.”** In the past, a few well-known evangelists have caused some embarrassment among Christians due to sexual impropriety. Leaders who claimed to be servants of God were caught in slavery to Satan. Perhaps the greatest sin in these cases is that they did not come forward to confess their sins until *caught*. I wonder how sincere a confession can be after being *caught in the act*.<sup>3</sup> God rightfully expects those “talking the talk should be walking the walk.” John says of the 144,000 that they **“did not defile themselves with women.”** This does not mean they are unmarried for the marriage relationship is holy, ordained by God. This statement indicates that these people are morally pure—fully committed to Jesus. The pure in heart shall represent God.<sup>3</sup>

One characteristic is certain about these 144,000 servants of God—they are blameless before God. Even the Old Testament prophet Zephaniah says of the remnant, **“The remnant of Israel will trust in the name of the Lord.**

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1 Genesis 49

2 Revelation 14:4–5

3 Nehemiah 13:26–27

**They will do no wrong; they will tell no lies. A deceitful tongue will not be found in their mouths.”<sup>1</sup>**

According to John, the Father’s name is written on their foreheads.<sup>2</sup> The Father represented His stamp of approval to John as His name on their forehead. The Father places this stamp on them because He approves of what is going on inside the forehead. According to the apostle Paul, those filled with the Holy Spirit possess the mind of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

The phrase “blameless before God” means that these individuals walk humbly in uprightness before God just like Noah, Abraham, and others. They speak truth, live truth, and, as a result of living by faith, they completely reflect the loving character of Jesus. They are sinners who have overcome besetting sins. The key to their being selected as one of the 144,000 is their perseverance for *overcoming*. Review the promises Jesus made to each of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. Jesus said to the church in Laodicea, **“To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.”<sup>4</sup>**

John also says these are **“offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.”** Firstfruits is a term describing a special offering Israel presented to the Lord at various feasts. This was particularly true at the final feast of the religious year, the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast was a feast of thanksgiving to God for the crops had been harvested and the choicest fruits were offered to the Lord. After the firstfruits were presented at the sacred service, they became the property of the high priest. The term, firstfruits, did not refer to the fruit presented first. Rather, it referred to the best or *choice* fruits of the harvest. We use similar words today. For example, the wife of the US president is called the *First Lady*. This does not mean she is chronologically the first lady in America; rather, she is the most exalted lady in our land.

The sanctuary sequence on earth follows the pattern of the heavenly sequence. So, after the seven trumpets and the close of mercy, just before the second coming, Jesus will receive the firstfruits of the harvest. He will receive the 144,000 as *firstfruits* or choice fruits of earth’s harvest and they

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1 Zephaniah 3:12–13

2 Revelation 14:1

3 1 Corinthians 2:16

4 Revelation 3:21

will become the special property of Jesus, our High Priest. His name is also written on the foreheads of the 144,000.<sup>1</sup> This elite group will form an entourage accompanying Jesus throughout the eternal universe. John says, **“They follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”**<sup>2</sup> Think of the privilege that belongs to each individual—being a personal attendant to Jesus!

The Holy City, New Jerusalem, has 12 gates and 12 foundations. Each gate bears the name of a tribe and each foundation, the name of an apostle.<sup>3</sup> Evidently the saints will enter the Holy City through the gate corresponding to their tribe or experience in the Lord. A group of 12,000 elite servants of God from each tribe leads the way through each gate. Everyone will belong to a tribe! Everyone will have a family. Think about God’s generosity. There will be an elite group from each character type of the human family. Even more, God finds perfection in differing character types.

### Point 5

The 144,000 sing a new song in heaven which no one else can learn. When Israel left Egypt, it faced an excruciating moment on the shore of the Red Sea. In today’s vernacular, “Israel was between the Devil and the deep blue sea” as Pharaoh’s army rushed to recapture the fugitives. On one side, Israel faced impassable mountains and, on the other side, an open desert. The Red Sea was in front and Pharaoh’s cavalry of 600 chariots was closing in behind them. What a predicament. What a moment of urgency!

The anguish of the moment was so great that the Hebrews cried out in terror for deliverance! The Lord looked on His children and delivered them. He parted the waters of the Red Sea, and the children of Israel walked through on dry ground. When Pharaoh’s army pursued the Israelites, God relaxed the parted waters and swallowed Pharaoh’s best soldiers, thus ending Israel’s worry with Egypt. **“Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: ‘I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and rider he has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.’”**<sup>4</sup> **“Pharaoh’s chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh’s officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a**

1 Revelation 14:1

2 Revelation 14:4

3 Revelation 21:12, 14

4 Exodus 15:1–2

stone.”<sup>1</sup> This song of deliverance relates to a specific experience. Only those who experienced this event could spontaneously sing the words.

God’s 144,000 servants will live through the most extreme circumstances of earth. Because they are God’s special servants, Satan’s wrath is especially fierce against them. John saw them as more than conquerors—they will be victorious over Satan even though many of them will die. They sing a new song that no one else can sing. No one else can sing their song for no one else has ever had their experience. No one else can join in, for they cannot sing the words.

### Point 6

The 144,000 will accomplish the great feat of proclaiming the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people during the seven trumpets. Because they will walk with God as Enoch did, these servants reach a higher level of spiritual maturity than any other person. They better understand Christ’s sufferings and works. The highest honor God can bestow upon a Christian is to allow the Christian to enter Christ’s suffering.<sup>2</sup>

The 144,000 will know what it means to live by faith as Jesus lived by faith. They know what complete submission to God’s will means. They would rather die than willfully commit a sin. They carry the responsibility of the gospel during the judgment hour to a reeling world—a mission that many cannot understand. These people are serious students of God’s Word. They receive the latter rain or outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They are both a demonstration and proclamation of the character of Jesus. The 144,000 are the choice fruits of heaven’s harvest. Think of them as clones of the apostle Paul.

The 144,000 will reach spiritual maturity just before the first trumpet occurs. Remember the text, **“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.”**<sup>3</sup> Jesus said, **“My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; the one whose walk is blameless will minister to me.”**<sup>4</sup>

In Revelation 12, the story of the true church (represented by a woman)

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1 Exodus 15:4–5

2 2 Corinthians 6:3–10; Mark 10:38–39

3 Revelation 7:3

4 Psalm 101:6

and a terrible dragon is told. The woman wears a crown of 12 stars on her head. From the Greek, we learn that these stars are set in a *stephanos* or crown of victory. Stars symbolize messengers or angels and by applying the words of Daniel 12:3 to Revelation's symbolism we find a very beautiful fit. **“Those who are wise [or teachers] will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”** In other words, the crown of victory is set with 12 stars that represent the glorious triumph of the 12 tribes. The 144,000 are *stars* in every sense of the word.

### Point 7

Rule 3 of apocalyptic prophecy requires that if the scriptural language is symbolic, the Bible must tell us the meaning of the symbol. So, if the number 144,000 is symbolic and does not represent a literal number of people, then the text must tell us the meaning of the symbol. Since no such description exists for any number in Revelation, we must regard the number as literal.

Numbers cannot be symbolic. For example, in Revelation 17, John saw a beast having 7 heads and 10 horns. The heads and horns are symbolic—not the numbers. The number 144,000 is a literal number. The term *servants of God* suggests that these individuals will powerfully lead the proclamation of the everlasting gospel. In fact, in Revelation 10:7 the servants are called prophets. So, the work of the 144,000 will be to first gather *remnant(1)* and then when the trumpets begin to sound, they will march into Babylon to gather *remnant(2)*.

### Two Witnesses and the 144,000

The Two Witnesses are at the heart of Revelation's story, but you may not understand them and how they relate to the 144,000. Revelation 11 provides the following specifications about the Two Witnesses.

1. The Two Witnesses will prophesy for 1,260 days in sackcloth. {v3}
2. They will be two olive trees and two lampstands that stand before the Lord. {v4}
3. Anyone who will try to harm them must die by fire. {v5}
4. These men will have the power to prevent rain (during the 1,260 days), turn water to blood, and strike the earth plagues. {v6}
5. After the 1,260 days end, the beast from the Abyss will attack and kill them. {v7}

6. Their bodies will lie in the street of a city called Sodom and Egypt, where Jesus was crucified. {v8}
7. The earth will rejoice that the Two Witnesses are dead. {v10}
8. After three-and-a-half days, they will live again. {v11}
9. They will go up to heaven in a cloud. {v12}

Revelation 11 describes the two instruments God will use to conclude the Plan of Salvation. I like to compare these two powerful instruments used together to a cutting torch. Oxygen and acetylene combined produce a hotter and more penetrating flame than when using either gas alone. In these last days, God is going to use the Two Witnesses to cut through the barriers of sin. The Two Witnesses are brought into prominent focus in the final days of earth because sin has almost destroyed the sensibilities of people. God has carefully designed the distress during the trumpets to provide opportunity and credibility for the Two Witnesses. They will offer salvation to all who want to be saved.

The term *witness* is very important since we understand that the Two Witnesses will accomplish their work during the time of the trumpets. The gospel will go to every person during this time, so the gospel becomes a witness for or against every person. The gospel either offers salvation or brings condemnation! There is no middle ground at the time when Jesus reveals the gospel. In the days ahead, as in ancient Israel, no one can be sentenced to death on the testimony of one witness. God told Moses, **“One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”**<sup>1</sup> God will send two witnesses to each person so that no one can miss salvation. If a person chooses to reject salvation, then both witnesses will testify against him and he will be condemned.

The Two Witnesses are:

- God’s eternal laws of love (the two lampstands).
- The ministry of the Holy Spirit (the two olive trees producing the oil).

The two laws define righteousness and wickedness, testifying about the behavior of God toward His created beings. The Holy Spirit appeals to the heart. It is through these cooperative agencies or *witnesses* that God works

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 19:15

to save man. **“I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.”**<sup>1</sup> This verse shows a relationship between the law, written in the mind and the heart, which is the Holy Spirit’s domain.

In Zechariah 4, we learn that God’s work on earth will be completed through the power of the Holy Spirit. **“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.”**<sup>2</sup>

Consider Zechariah’s vision: **“He asked me, ‘What do you see?’**

**“I answered, ‘I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lamps. Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.’**

**“I asked the angel who talked with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’**

**“He answered, ‘Do you not know what these are?’**

**“‘No, my lord,’ I replied.”**<sup>3</sup>

Notice the indirect answer to Zechariah: **“So he said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.”**<sup>4</sup> But, Zechariah’s curiosity wasn’t satisfied. **“Then I asked the angel, ‘What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?’**

**“Again I asked him, ‘What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?’**

**“He replied, ‘Do you not know what these are?’**

**“‘No, my lord,’ I said.**

**“So he said, ‘These are the two who are anointed [chosen] to serve the Lord of all the earth.”**<sup>5</sup>

Zechariah saw one lampstand with seven lights and two olive trees with golden pipes connected between the trees and the lights. The angel told Zechariah the two symbols serve the Lord of all the earth. Now, Zechariah knew the following: Clear olive oil was daily used for the seven lamps in

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1 Hebrews 8:10

2 Zechariah 4:6

3 Zechariah 4:2–5

4 Zechariah 4:6

5 Zechariah 4:11–14

the temple and priests put the oil in the lamps every morning and evening. However, the specifications John described in Revelation 11 are slightly different.

- Two olive trees
- Two lampstands
- They serve the Lord of the earth.

### Interpretive Differences

In the wilderness sanctuary, there was one lampstand with seven lamps in the tabernacle. One lampstand represents one agency from which the light of God’s truth shines—and the light is complete with the seven lamps. The lampstand in the ancient tabernacle represented the *anointed* agency of God spreading His truth: His *chosen people*. His people were to carry His Word to the Gentiles.<sup>1</sup>

In Zechariah’s day, there was still one lampstand with seven lamps. However, Zechariah saw something different about the lampstand as it *stood before the throne of God in heaven*. Instead of priests putting the oil into the lamps, God had two olive trees automatically filling the lamps with oil. In other words, God kept the lamps burning by having living trees fill the lampstand.

God wanted Zechariah to understand that the living trees, producing ever-flowing oil, represented the work of the Holy Spirit. This is how God kept truth alive—not by man’s power. The angel told Zechariah, “Not by might (human means) but by my Spirit (God’s means),” which emphasized that God would keep His truth shining throughout the world. Those two olive trees producing oil represent the work of the Holy Spirit. There were two trees because there are two times the Holy Spirit is particularly active in the harvest of souls: the early rain and the latter rain. These refer to two rainfalls in Palestine just before harvest, a light one in the spring and a second, heavier one in the fall which produced a larger yield.

Seven hundred years later, John saw seven distinct lampstands before God,<sup>2</sup> each representing one of the seven churches. God had abandoned

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1 Isaiah 42:6

2 Revelation 1:12

the nation of Israel as His chosen agency and had turned to His seven churches—His chosen agents or trustees of His Word. God appointed seven attending angels to help keep each of the seven lamps brightly burning to assist each church in its special work.<sup>1</sup>

### A Change of Agents

At the end of the age, God will abandon the agency of the seven churches because human beings have proven to be untrustworthy as agents of God's Law. His law, represented by the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, will be His chosen agent of last resort at the end of the age. God will use two nonhuman agents, represented by the two lampstands,<sup>2</sup> to accomplish His plans for the end time. One lampstand represents the first tablet of stone and the other lampstand represents the second tablet of stone. God's Law is changeless, a perfect light displacing darkness. The Law of God is the plumb line of truth. His Law is found and explained in God's Word, and it bears witness to the actions of the living. Our actions during the Great Tribulation will be measured by the Law's definition of true vertical—giving allegiance to God's truth.

The 144,000 will present the final prophetic message that comes from the open book taken from the hand of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> John ate the book, which is the prophetic message coming from Daniel and Revelation. The eating of the book means that John *digested* the message contained in the book. When John entered the experience of the 144,000 in Revelation 10 by eating the book that was given to him, the seven lampstands disappeared. Instead of seven lampstands, only *two* lampstands stood before the Lord, but the two olive trees remained unchanged. The impressions from the Holy Spirit and God's Law provide the Two Witnesses, testifying about each person's actions and decision regarding salvation.

Therefore. . .

Witness 1 = Two Lampstands = Tablets of Stone = God's Law = Agency 1

Witness 2 = Two Olive Trees = Early/Latter Rain = Ministry of the Holy Spirit = Agency 2

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1 Revelation 1:20

2 Revelation 11:4

3 Revelation 10:8–11

These Two Witnesses provide God’s anointed means for presenting His truth in the coming days. **“And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth [distressing circumstances]. They are ‘the two olive trees’ and the two lampstands and they ‘stand before the Lord of the earth.’”**<sup>1</sup> Understand that God’s Law and the Holy Spirit serve the Lord as the final agencies of salvation. For 1,260 literal days, the Law and Holy Spirit will work mightily under the most distressing circumstances. The Two Witnesses will suffer great rejection but will gather the elect of God from all corners of the earth.

**“If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.”**<sup>2</sup> The Two Witnesses testify about present truth. In the coming days, their message to the world will be a life and death matter. Some who first reject God’s Law may later accept the conviction of the Holy Spirit and be saved. Some who reject the impress of the Holy Spirit at first, may later see the truth in God’s Law and be saved. Remember these two points.

- No one will be sentenced to eternal death by the testimony of one witness. It takes the rejection of both. Jesus will save anyone willing to listen.<sup>3</sup>
- “Fire came out of the mouths of the Two Witnesses.” This may be a figure of speech having to do with final reward much like the sword that comes out of Jesus’ mouth at the second coming. Revelation 19:15 says, **“Coming out of his [Jesus’ mouth] is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.”**

**“They [the 144,000 men and women, young and old—Joel 2:28–31] have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.”**<sup>4</sup> Jesus will give the 144,000 supernatural powers so their message will have credibility. No rain for 1,260 days? Notice this text: James 5:17 says, **“Elijah**

1 Revelation 11:3–4

2 Revelation 11:5

3 Deuteronomy 19:15

4 Revelation 11:6

was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.”

The 144,000 will have powers like Moses before Pharaoh: They can **“strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.”** These manifestations will be occurring at a time when the earth is greatly suffering from the devastation of the trumpets. By the time of the fifth trumpet (the appearing of the Devil), you can see why the world will put their hopes in the lies of the Devil. Satan will claim that the wicked are suffering due to the satanic powers of the 144,000. Thus, the anger of the wicked will be directed at God’s people.

### **Killed by Beast from Abyss**

**“Now when they [the Law and Holy Spirit] have finished [completed giving] their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.”**<sup>1</sup> A person might claim that it is impossible to kill the Law and the Holy Spirit. However, the *work* and influence of God’s Law and the Holy Spirit can be killed. In fact, Lucifer and his angels killed their work and influence in Heaven. The plumb line of God’s Law testified that Lucifer’s actions were sinful and the Holy Spirit testified that Lucifer and his followers had hardened their hearts to the point that further communion with God was impossible. The same process will occur on earth. The Devil will use his deceptive miracles, as well as torture, to kill the work and influence of God’s Two Witnesses. Of course, Satan cannot kill the Holy Spirit or abolish God’s Law, but he can lead people into rebellion through sin. The Devil can kill the influence of the Holy Spirit in any person who cooperates with him. Once we grieve away the Holy Spirit with persistent defiance, our blasphemy becomes permanent and, therefore, unpardonable.<sup>2</sup>

At the close of mercy, everyone will have either accepted or rejected the saving message of the Two Witnesses. Thus, their work will be completely accomplished, and their saving influence will end. The Two Witnesses will have completed their work for the salvation of mankind. Their influence will be made of no-effect (killed) by the beast that ascends from the Abyss. The beast from the Abyss is the physical appearance of the Devil.

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1 Revelation 11:7

2 Matthew 12:31–32

### The Great City

**“Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified.”**<sup>1</sup> God’s Law and the Holy Spirit do not lie in the street of the great city because “the great city” is not a geographical place. The verse incorporates the figurative terms—bodies, great city, Sodom, Egypt. While few would argue the terms bodies, Sodom, or Egypt are figurative, they might argue that the great city must be a physical location. However, Revelation 17:18 states, **“The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”**

The phrase, **“Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city,”** refers to the ancient practice of victors showing utter contempt for their enemies. In ancient times, the greatest contempt a king could show for his enemies was to leave his enemies unburied. This allowed the dogs, vultures, and vermin to eat their victims. The stench of death and the never-to-be-forgotten sight of human beings being eaten by animals was a powerful testimony to anyone wishing to rebel against the king. Understand that when the Two Witnesses finish their work, the wicked will feel no sorrow or remorse when the 144,000 are slain. In fact, they will gloat and rejoice.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of the seventh trumpet when the opportunity for salvation ends, the people of earth will be like those in the days of Sodom—having hearts full of unrestrained evil. As it was the days of Egypt—they will have hardness of heart. In other words, the world will have committed the unpardonable sin and the people of earth will then either be citizens of Babylon the Great or New Jerusalem. When the Two Witnesses finish their testimony, God’s servants will die, and **“Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city [Babylon the Great].”**

Their work is done, the outpouring of the latter rain is finished. Most, if not all, of the 144,000 will be dead—their testimony silenced. Many of God’s saints will also be dead. The wicked, abandoned by God to the Devil, cheer, “Good riddance!” No more conscience. No more calls to obey God’s commandments or the God of heaven.

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1 Revelation 11:8

2 Revelation 11:10

### Events Concerning the 144,000

Let's review the order of events so this makes sense. First, Jesus will select and empower the 144,000. They will prophesy 1,260 days under difficult circumstances and will complete their work with distinction. Revelation indicates that many of the 144,000 will die just as John the Baptist died after completing his task. Countless saints will also die as martyrs during this fifth seal.

The beast from the Abyss (the Devil) will kill the influence of God's Law and the Holy Spirit by deceiving many and forcing the rest of mankind during the sixth trumpet war to obey him. Those who do not live by faith will choose to receive his mark for survival.

When the 144,000 are killed, no one will care enough to even bury them. The wicked have continued to despise the 144,000 and the remaining saints will be in hiding. **“The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them [the bodies of the 144,000] and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets [God's Law and the Holy Spirit] had tormented those who live on the earth. But [their celebration was premature because] after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them [the 144,000], and they [came to life,] stood on their feet, and terror struck those [the wicked] who saw them.”**<sup>1</sup>

After the three-and-one-half days end, I anticipate the 144,000 will be resurrected during the early morning hours (like Jesus) on a Sunday. I like to imagine something like this happening: Even though it is still dark, a glorious light illumines each dead prophet as he or she comes to life. They walk about. Word breaks out and everyone goes to see them. The wicked are totally undone—overcome with trembling and anxiety. Then, a loud voice from heaven says to the 144,000, **“Come up here.”**

The timing becomes interesting because firstfruits were always presented to the Lord on a Sunday in ancient times. Jesus himself, the firstfruits of the dead,<sup>2</sup> presented himself to the Father on Sunday morning.<sup>3</sup> Since the 144,000 will be the firstfruits of a numberless multitude who come out of the Great Tribulation, it is more than coincidental that they should be

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1 Revelation 11:10–11

2 1 Corinthians 15:20

3 John 20:1, 17

presented to God on Sunday. **“These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as *firstfruits* to God and the Lamb.”**<sup>1</sup>

**“Then they [the 144,000] heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud [of glory], while their enemies looked on. At that very hour [all over the world] there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city [a portion of the great whore] collapsed. Seven thousand people [Lucifer’s employees] were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors [the saints who are in hiding or awaiting death in dungeons and prisons] were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe [the sixth trumpet] has passed; the third woe [the seven bowls] is coming soon.”**<sup>2</sup>

Imagine the terror of the wicked murderers watching their victims regain life. Those who are resurrected will be clothed with immortality and great power. Then Jesus will take the 144,000, who fearlessly have born His testimony to the world, to heaven *before* He resurrects the rest of His people at His second coming. The 144,000 are Jesus’ special trophies and they will attend Him wherever He goes. Remember, they are firstfruits.

### **The 144,000 Servant/Prophets**

The Bible indicates that some of the 144,000 will die during the great tribulation. Think about the following texts. Revelation 7:3 says, **“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.”** Notice that the 144,000 are called *servants*.

Revelation 10:7 says, **“But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.”** Notice that in this text, the servants are identified as *prophets*.

Revelation 10:11 says, **“Then I (John, in the experience of the 144,000) was told, ‘You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.’”** Notice in this text, that those who proclaim the message contained in the open book are to *prophesy* again. Prophets prophesy, don’t they?

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1 Revelation 14:4

2 Revelation 11:12–14

Revelation 11:18 says, **“The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and your people who revere your name, both great and small—and for destroying those who destroy the earth”** Notice in this verse, concerning the seventh trumpet, that the servants of God are again identified as prophets. This text identifies the prophets as a distinct group from the saints.

Revelation 16:5–7 says, **“Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: ‘You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.’**

**“And I heard the altar respond: ‘Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.’”** In these verses, the third plague falls on those who shed the blood of saints during the fifth seal *and* who also shed the blood of prophets. This time, the distinction between saints and prophets is very clear.

Finally, Revelation 18:24 says, **“In her [the whore] was found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth.”** Again, the distinction is made between prophets and saints in this verse. Down through the ages, prophets have died for their testimony. Even the greatest prophet of all, John the Baptist was beheaded. Why should the 144,000 be given an exemption from martyrdom? Why should they escape the fate of many they lead to Christ?

### Summary

The 144,000 and the Two Witnesses are God’s final means of gathering His sheep. Think about the combination brought to this time: individuals from all parts of the world educated in the knowledge of the Scriptures—especially the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation—and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Put this combination in the setting of the worldwide havoc caused by the trumpets and the 144,000 will play an important part in some amazing events that are bound to occur!





## Four Beasts – The Woman and the Dragon

In Old Testament times, a person accused of murder could not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. **“On the testimony of two or three witnesses a person is to be put to death, but no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. The hands of the witnesses must be the first in putting that person to death, and then the hands of all the people..”**<sup>1</sup>

During the time of the trumpets, the gospel goes as a *testimony* to every nation and person. Jesus said, **“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”**<sup>2</sup> Two Witnesses—God’s Law and the Holy Spirit—give this life or death testimony. In Revelation’s story, no one will be condemned for rejecting the testimony of one witness. There will be Two Witnesses appealing for salvation. One appeals to the mind, the other to the heart.

### The Unpardonable Sin

According to the Bible, there are two types of sin—accidental or unpardonable. An accidental sin would be when you hit your finger with a hammer and say a bad word without willful intention. Sometimes we say things that are untrue (or not altogether true) without intending to do so. John was aware of both types of sin when he wrote, **“If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that you should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.”**<sup>3</sup>

1 Deuteronomy 17:6–7

2 Matthew 24:14

3 1 John 5:16–17

The unpardonable sin is deadly and comes from persistent wrongdoing. Paul wrote, **“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.”**<sup>1</sup>

Jesus told the Pharisees, **“And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”**<sup>2</sup>

People commit unpardonable sins when they persistently refuse to yield to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. One definition of the word blasphemy is to *take the prerogatives of God*.<sup>3</sup>

The Holy Spirit’s work is to lead us into *all* truth, but if we refuse to be led into *all* truth, we reject the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Israel persistently refused to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and their hearts and minds became hard as stone. God promised Ezekiel that He would forgive Israel’s sins if they cooperated. He said, **“I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.”**<sup>4</sup> Israel’s heart of stone led them to crucify Jesus and then justify their deed. Remember, Revelation says the condition of the world will be like Sodom and Egypt in the days of the Two Witnesses. Sodom signifies unrestrained evil, and Egypt signifies hardness of heart. These terms from Revelation indicate that much of the world will commit the unpardonable sin. Much of the world will reject the testimony of the Two Witnesses. Those who receive them will receive the gospel and be saved. Those who reject the testimony of the Two Witnesses will receive the mark of the beast. It will be that simple.

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1 Hebrews 10:26–27

2 Matthew 12:31–32

3 Matthew 24:64–65

4 Ezekiel 11:19

### Satan's Plans Revealed

Thus far in our study, we have investigated the activities of Jesus in heaven. We learned about the book with seven seals and the seven trumpets. As we begin our investigation of Revelation 12, John changes the focus of the story to tell us about the Devil's response to the seven trumpets. God wants His people to be aware of this wicked foe for we need to know about his actions and plans for the last days.

### Remember the Rules of Interpretation

Revelation describes four beasts that play a very important role in the final days of earth and we must identify the four beasts correctly. Otherwise, our prophetic conclusions will be faulty and who wants to head into the Great Tribulation with a faulty road map? If we maintain faulty conclusions, we will not be able to satisfy the specifications attributed to each beast. *All* specifications regarding the beasts are of equal importance. In fact, God designed Revelation's story so there is only one correct solution for each beast's identity. This requires us to ensure that we are using appropriate rules of prophetic interpretation.

- Rule 1.** An apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning and an ending point in time and the events in the prophecy must occur in the order in which they are given.
- Rule 2.** A fulfillment of prophecy only occurs when all the specifications of the prophecy are met, including the order of events within the prophecy.
- Rule 3.** If a prophetic element is declared symbolic, the meaning of the symbol must be revealed with applicable scripture.
- Rule 4.** The Jubilee Calendar determines whether a prophetic day is literal time or translated as day for a year.

### Four Beasts

While the count for the Lamb-like and Dragon-like beasts vary depending on Bible translation, the following beasts are mentioned in Revelation.

- Lamb—31 times
- Lamb-like—15 times
- Dragon—12 times
- Dragon-like—21 times

We begin our investigation of the beasts with the first beast: the Lamb.

Revelation 5:6 **“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”**

Revelation 5:12 **“In a loud voice they sang: ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!’”**

Revelation 6:16 **“They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!’”<sup>1</sup>**

Revelation 14:1 **“Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.”**

Obviously, this beast represents Jesus due to the following specifications that identify the Lamb.

- The Lamb was slain.
- The Lamb has seven horns.
- The Lamb has seven eyes.
- The Lamb is found worthy to receive a seven-fold gift of power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and praise.
- The Lamb is angry at the second coming.
- The Lamb appears with the 144,000 who wear His name and His Father’s name.

Jesus is represented as a lamb in Revelation’s story because He is the Lamb of God—God’s sacrifice for man’s sins.<sup>2</sup> The book of Revelation centers on the revealing of Jesus—this is why it is called, *The Revelation of Jesus*. Everyone will learn who Jesus really is. Not even the angels of heaven have seen everything about Jesus. They have not yet seen Him reigning over the universe as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Plan of Salvation has to do with man’s redemption and, on a universal scale, it discloses that Jesus

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1 See also Revelation 19:15.

2 John 1:29

really is God! He has the same power and authority as the Father, but He was willing to lay everything aside and become human, to be beaten and crucified by men, so we could have eternal life. Jesus laid aside His divine authority. He became a servant to the Plan of Salvation like a son is subject to his father. The revelation of all who Jesus is began when the Father stepped aside in the court scene of Daniel 7:9–10 so Jesus could take center stage and be revealed to the hosts of the universe as ALMIGHTY GOD.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus is called “**the Lion of the tribe of Judah.**”<sup>1</sup> It is possible for Jesus to be symbolized as both a lion and a lamb. When Jesus comes in all His glory, He will appear with the strength and ferocity of a lion to those who oppose His truth.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, those who stand firm for His truth will rejoice to see the Lamb who took away their sins and paid the price for their salvation.

### **A Beast is Not Always a Nation**

Some people assert that a beast in Bible prophecy is *always* a nation. This rule of interpretation, they argue, is revealed in Daniel 7 where four beasts represent four world empires and in Daniel 8 where two beasts represent two world empires. Beasts do represent world empires in Daniel 7 and 8, but this does not mean they *always* represent world empires in the rest of the Bible. In Revelation’s symbolism, the Lamb cannot represent a nation for Jesus is represented as *a Lamb that was slain* and is found worthy to receive the book sealed with seven seals. A political entity could not have been slain or been in heaven and received the book sealed with seven seals. Jesus is not a nation and Revelation’s use of a beast does not imply that Jesus is a nation. Most people agree that a lamb is a beast just like a lion, leopard, or bear. Therefore, the claim that beasts are *always* nations cannot be a rule of interpretation, for the rule cannot *always* be applied. A rule is something that is *always* true.

In Revelation 12, we learn that the great red dragon (certainly a horrible beast) is *Satan the angel* that was cast down from heaven. Review Rule 3 and notice that when elements are symbolic in nature, the Bible reveals their meaning. Obviously, Jesus must be the Lamb. And there can be no doubt that the great red dragon of Chapter 12 is the Devil. Some Bible students

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1 Revelation 5:5

2 Hosea 5:14; Revelation 19:15

suggest this dragon represents pagan or papal Rome; yet they cannot explain Revelation 12:4, which states the great dragon's tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the ground. How did pagan or papal Rome do that?

Be careful not to accept pseudo rules of interpretation. Some people argue that a horn in Bible prophecy *always* represents a kingdom or a nation. They use Daniel 7:24 to support their claim. The 10 horns are often identified as 10 tribal nations that finally overran Rome by AD 476. However, Daniel wrote the 10 horns are 10 kings. It is true that a king must have subjects, and subjects constitute a nation. So, in a roundabout way, it is not hard to see why people associate horns with nations. However, there is a gotcha. Whom does the large horn between the eyes of the goat in Daniel 8:8 represent? According to Daniel 8:21, that horn is the *first* king, not the first *kingdom* of Greece. Nor can it be any of the succeeding kings of Greece. In the context of Daniel 8, a horn consistently represents a single person. In fact, the four horns that replaced the first horn refer to four persons.

### **Horns in Daniel 7 and 8**

Now, contrast the use of a horn in Daniel 8 with the little horn of Daniel 7. In Daniel 7, the little horn power does not represent one person, but rather the office of *king*. We know this is true for the little horn power operates for a period of 1,260 years, certainly longer than one lifetime.

A Bible student must respect the context of each prophecy and attempt to understand how the elements are used. The uses of elements change. Therefore, there are no rules about prophetic elements—the context of the prophecy must be our guide.

So, in Daniel 7, the 10 horns are 10 kings, and the little horn is also a king. However, the little horn lasts for 1,260 years, so it must represent the office of a king and not one man. However, in Daniel 8, the notable horn is one person who dies and the four horns who take his place are four persons. The context of the prophecy makes the difference in how the elements are to be interpreted.

### **A Glorious Woman**

Let's begin our investigation of a prophecy that begins in Revelation 12:1 and extends to Revelation 14:5. Revelation 12:1–2 states, **"A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under**

**her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.”**

This text lists six elements including symbolic definitions that we need to consider in our study. In these first two verses, God highlights six great themes that are often overlooked or reduced in meaning. These are the woman, sun, moon, crown, her pregnancy, and the timing of the prophecy.

### **Who is the Woman?**

The woman is a bride representing God’s people.

According to Daniel 9, the Messiah was to appear 483 years (69 Jubilee weeks) after Artaxerxes’ decree to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem. When Jesus gave this prophecy to Daniel, He hoped for a great wedding and reception. The bride, Israel, and the bridegroom, Messiah, were to be married.

John the Baptist knew he was sent to announce this wedding. John said to his disciples: **“You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.”**<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the wedding of Messiah and Israel didn’t happen because Israel turned her affection to other gods. Despite God’s great love and mercy, Israel continued her rebellion. **“Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: ‘This is what the LORD says: ‘I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown.’”**<sup>2</sup> **“Does a young woman forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number”**<sup>3</sup> This sounds like a broken heart.

God’s original plan (Plan A) failed. But He has an alternate plan (Plan B). **“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride [the woman] has made herself ready.”**<sup>4</sup> The Messiah is going to get married anyway. The wedding of the Lamb is

1 John 3:28–29

2 Jeremiah 2:2

3 Jeremiah 2:32

4 Revelation 19:7

still on. This time, the bride will be individuals from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people who want to be married to the Lord. Here's the offer: **“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”**<sup>1</sup>

The wedding is still to come. Jesus' bride will consist of those who love Jesus so much that they completely yield their lives to Him. Applying these verses to Revelation 12, we conclude that the bride represents God's people. Now, here is a gotcha: Does the bride represent literal Israel at the time of Christ's birth or does the woman represent spiritual Israel? Your answer is important because it sets the stage for the rest of Chapter 12. Are we dealing with spiritual concepts that are larger than life, or are we dealing with representations of real elements that we can historically identify? Again, we must let the context be our guide.

### The Sun

The woman was clothed with the brightness of the sun. Her garment represents the righteousness of Jesus.

**“Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her [the bride] to wear.’ (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.)”**<sup>2</sup> At first glance, you might interpret this text to mean that the righteous acts of God's people is clothing enough. Before getting too far into wearing your own righteousness, consider these texts: God told Moses, **“Make linen undergarments as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh. Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the tent of meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die.”**<sup>3</sup>

God required special underwear for the priests who served in the sanctuary, and God requires special *innerwear* for those going to His wedding banquet. **“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless. Then the**

1 John 1:11–13

2 Revelation 19:8

3 Exodus 28:42–43

**king told the attendants, “Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”**<sup>1</sup>

The meaning, then, is that the bride of Jesus wears fine linen, bright as the sun. This represents the righteousness of Jesus shown by those who receive it through their righteous deeds. The people of Jesus will rejoice singing: **“I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”**<sup>2</sup> Jesus’ bride (the saints) will wear a garment of light even brighter than Adam and Eve—as bright as the sun. The adornment of God is complete, beautiful, and more glorious than pen can tell.

### **The Moon**

The woman stood on the moon. The moon represents God’s promise or covenant of marriage.

**“I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered.”**<sup>3</sup> **It will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.”**<sup>4</sup>

God’s covenant is the basis of marriage between the Lamb and the woman. Two individuals cannot be married (as intended) without a mutual covenant of fidelity. Understand how the marriage covenant between God and His people works: God said, IF you will be my people, I will be your God, AND there will be marriage.<sup>5</sup> Jesus told His disciples, **“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that 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.”**<sup>6</sup>

Many people are confused about God’s *everlasting* covenants with mankind. One man told me that God’s covenant with Israel was irrevocable because God’s promises are irrevocable. While it is true that God’s promises

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1 Matthew 22:11–13

2 Isaiah 61:10

3 Psalm 89:34

4 Psalm 89:37

5 Hebrews 8:10

6 John 14:2–3

are irrevocable, some promises require a relationship with man. These *always* contain qualifying conditions. For example, the everlasting covenant, “If you will be my people, I will be your God” begins with *If*. I do not believe God’s covenant with Abraham or Moses or Israel was unconditional.<sup>1</sup> Paul confirmed that God’s covenants were conditional.<sup>2</sup>

When the marriage of the Lamb and the woman occurs, the everlasting covenant will change! The “IF” part of the covenant will be eliminated for it will be unconditional. **“Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.”**<sup>3</sup> No more ifs, ands, or buts. No conditional element will remain in the covenant. The bride will be sealed in holy matrimony to the Bridegroom for eternity. Hallelujah!

Interestingly, the woman wears a garment as bright as the sun and she stands on the moon. Given the physics of the sun and moon, it appears that the people of Jesus, wearing His gift of righteousness, stand by faith on His covenant of promised marriage. Since the moon has no light of itself, the covenant of marriage has no meaning by itself. However, when we properly understand the gift of Christ’s righteousness, His light of righteousness brings the glorious opportunity of entering the marriage covenant with Jesus into clear focus. What an unbelievable honor for Jesus to want to enter into a covenant to spend eternity with us. Again, I say, Hallelujah!

### The Crown

Crown of 12 stars = Victory = 144,000

The woman wears a *stephanos* crown which, in the Greek language, means a crown of victory. This crown stands in contrast to the Greek *diadema* which is a crown of authority. The bride wears a crown of victory because she represents those through the ages who have overcome the Devil and his schemes. Remember the promises Jesus gave to the seven churches, “To him that overcomes, I will.” Remember the conditional nature of the covenant, “If you will be my people?” God’s people can overcome anything through the power of Jesus.

Notice John’s admiration for the victory of the bride: **“And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea,**

1 Deuteronomy 28; Leviticus 18 & 26

2 Romans 2 & 11; Galatians 3 & 4; Hebrews 10 & 11

3 Revelation 21:7

those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb: ‘Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations.’”<sup>1</sup>

So, the bride is entitled to wear the crown of victory because she is victorious over the dragon, his image, and his number through the ages.

Before we answer the question of what the 12 stars represent, remember that in order to interpret a prophetic symbol, we must allow the context to guide us. The Bible provides many verses to identify what stars may represent. Here are two groups of texts about stars.

1. Revelation 1:20; 12:4; 14:6–12; Daniel 12:3
2. Revelation 6:13; 8:12

We find prophetic elements meaning one thing in the first group of texts, and then meaning something else in the other group. If you *did* look up the texts, you noted that there was no consistency about the definition of stars in prophecy. Sometimes, stars represented messengers or angels doing God’s work, and sometimes stars represented meteors that fall out of the sky. Thankfully, we can identify the correct meaning of the stars as we consider each context.

For example, the angels of the seven churches in Revelation 1:20 are *heavenly* messengers of God assigned to each church. In contrast, the three angels in Revelation 14:6–12 represent *earthly* messengers of God carrying His final offer of mercy to a dying world. Notice how Daniel’s testimony collaborates with this last thought: **“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”**<sup>2</sup>

The 144,000 will not be movie stars, rock stars, or political stars. They will be *gospel stars* among God’s jewels on the day that He makes up His crown. Using figurative speech, if the woman represents the people of Christ, and the head of the body is Jesus, it seems fitting (pun intended) that surrounding the Head are the 144,000 who were victorious just as He was victorious. These are forever His intimate friends. Isn’t it beautiful that the

1 Revelation 15:2–3

2 Daniel 12:3

relationship between the bride and Jesus is compared to the most intimate of human relationships: marriage?

### **The Woman—Pregnant and in Pain.**

God’s faith-full people have always hoped for Jesus to appear, either in His first advent as a baby or in the second as King of Kings. The pregnant condition of the woman suggests a particular time for this scene in Revelation 12. You may have heard the expression, “Pregnant with expectation.” Luke said of the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (AD 27), “**The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.**”<sup>1</sup> Paul, speaking about the timely appearing of Jesus, said, “**But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman.**”<sup>2</sup> Jesus knew that His ministry was on time. He read in the synagogue at Nazareth, “**The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.**”<sup>3</sup>

So, the pregnancy of the woman gives a clue regarding the timing of this vision. Because each apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning and ending point, we must start this prophecy and its sequence at a specific point in time.

### **Revelation 12 Timing**

The rules of interpretation are extremely important, and we will apply the first three rules in the next few verses. The rules of interpretation are not manmade. Rather, it is only our privilege to observe the operation of laws or rules. Remember, Sir Isaac Newton did not invent the law of gravity. God did. However, Sir Isaac did observe the consistent behavior of gravity and he devised a formula stating the operation of gravity. Incidentally, we refer to the *law* of gravity because it is uniformly consistent wherever you go on earth. A physical law is *always true*.

Similarly, man cannot make up laws or rules for prophetic interpretation. We can only state what the rules are by conducting a careful and prayerful investigation. God carefully designed the scenes in the prophecies, He

1 Luke 3:15

2 Galatians 4:4

3 Luke 4:18–19

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orchestrated their order, and He knew in advance what He wanted them to mean. However, He withheld general understanding of the principles of how the prophecies operate until the last generation arrives. How else will the last generation know they are the final one?

Obviously, Daniel and John did not understand the meaning of what they saw. Therefore, as writers of things revealed, they could not even venture a personal comment on what the visions meant. Their ignorance preserved the purity of what they had seen. In other words, they could not interject their own thoughts and thus frustrate the operation of the prophetic process. The result is that today, the precision of the prophecies and their internal linkage is unfolding and the relationships between all 17 apocalyptic prophecies are no less marvelous and no less certain than the behavior of electrons and atoms.

Now, we must apply the first three rules to Revelation 12:1–14:5. This prophecy has a beginning point in time, an ending point in time, and each element within the story occurs in order. This does not mean that all words in each verse or all verses are in chronological order. It means that the events described in the verses are in chronological order. On a few occasions, both Daniel and John temporarily interrupted the flow of their stories to add a few details so we can more clearly understand what they are saying. This does not frustrate the obvious order of the story, nor does it cancel the first rule of interpretation. After all, isn't the purpose of this investigation to understand the prophecies?

According to Rule 2 of apocalyptic prophecy, a fulfillment is only possible when all specifications of the prophecy are met. We must satisfy *all specifications* in our calculation before we can reach a conclusion. Be careful. Many students attempt to solve one prophecy and ignore the impact their conclusions have on the other 16 prophecies. Instead, we must satisfy the texts or symbols at hand AND their existing relationships with the other 16 prophecies before we can be relatively certain of our conclusions. So, we have to consider all 17 prophecies before we can be sure we have correctly interpreted the details of a single prophecy.

Last, if a prophecy is thought to be symbolic, we must use *applicable* scripture to explain the meaning of the symbol. THEN, put everything together and see what the story says.

### More Specifications About Timing

**“Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born.”<sup>1</sup>**

The first four verses of Revelation 12 introduce the story and the main characters of this prophecy. John writes the story so we can identify the players and watch their interactions.

1. John saw another scene in heaven. Remember, he first saw the woman standing on the moon.
2. John saw an enormous red dragon having 7 heads and 10 horns, and there were 7 diadems (crowns of authority) on the 7 heads.
3. John noted that the dragon’s tale (OK, tail) was responsible for the fall of one-third of the stars, and they were flung to earth.
4. John saw the dragon stand before the woman to devour the child the moment it was born.

### A Cosmic Story

John saw the woman and the dragon in the sky, not on earth. This nuance heightens the drama that is about to unfold on earth. This perspective is cosmic, so it means that the story is much larger than earthly events. This is a story about a conflict between Jesus and Satan. Understand that Christ and Satan have already been adversaries when this story begins. In fact, they had been foes for several millenniums when Jesus was born.

John described the enormous red dragon as having 7 heads and 10 horns with 7 diadems on the heads. Who is the dragon? Who or what are the stars that were flung to the earth? Is this pagan Rome and its legions? Is it papal Rome and her priests? Is this a world empire? This dragon is not a nation—either in a primary or secondary sense. This story is not about some nation. The Bible plainly says who the dragon is. **“The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the Devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”<sup>2</sup>**

1 Revelation 12:3–4

2 Revelation 12:9

Once we know the identity of the dragon, the Bible makes sense just as it reads. The following verse reveals what will occur just after Jesus' second coming. **"He [a mighty angel] seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years."**<sup>1</sup> "Who is this dragon that is bound for a thousand years? Is it a nation or world empire?" No. It is the Devil himself. The enormous red dragon with 7 heads and 10 horns is the Devil.

One more time. **"Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus."**<sup>2</sup> This verse reveals that the Devil, not a single nation, will lead and control the final warfare against the saints. Any dilution of the correct meaning of the dragon makes the story of Revelation illogical and confusing. For example, some scholars claim that this dragon represents pagan or papal Rome. However, they cannot defend this decision in light of the rules of interpretation.

### Crowns

I must make a comment about the crowns belonging to the dragon in this prophecy. In Revelation 12, there are 7 diadems on 7 heads. In Chapter 13, there are 10 diadems on 10 horns. We know that diadems are crowns of authority in contrast to the *stephanos*, the crown of victory that the woman wears. This is the way it works. In Christ's day, the Devil exercised his authority against the *woman* through false religion.

The Jews condemned Jesus. Andrew was crucified in Achaia on a cross in the form of an X. Bartholomew was crucified in Armenia. James, the son of Zebedee, was beheaded. James, the son of Alphaeus, was beaten to death. Peter was crucified upside down. Philip, Thaddeus, and Thomas were martyrs for their faith. Paul was beheaded for his faith. During the 1,260 years of persecution, the little horn murdered millions of saints.

Each died for challenging false religion. In other words, the persecuting authority came from the religious sector. In the days before us, after the devastation of the first four trumpets, Satan's authority against the *woman* will come through civil authority, that is, by penalty of civil law. Eventually, leaders in each of the 200+ countries of the world will implement laws con-

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1 Revelation 20:2

2 Revelation 12:17

cerning the exercise of religion. State troopers, sheriffs, police, and military personnel will enforce the laws. This is why the diadems are transferred from the heads in Revelation 12 (religious authorities) to the horns in Chapter 13 (civil authorities). The source of persecution changes.

John said that a third of the stars were flung to the earth by the tail of the dragon. This refers to the expulsion of the Devil and his angel followers before the world was created, more than 4,000 years before the birth of Jesus. Knowing this helps us to realize that first, the Devil has hated Jesus for a long time. Second, consider the size of the Devil's army. If Daniel saw billions of angels attending the courtroom scene in Daniel 7:9–10, and this is after the expulsion of the Devil, how many angels does Satan have?

The dragon stood before the woman to devour her child as soon as it was born. John saw the Devil attempt to kill Jesus. We know the Devil moved on Herod's evil heart to implement a wicked plan as soon as he learned about Jesus' birth. Herod's attempt to destroy Jesus was not an edict of the Roman Empire. Herod acted on his own, using the authority of his office. This hideous act was not a deliberate or calculated act of pagan Rome. I emphasize this point because some people don't understand that this prophecy is about the Devil's actions. Instead, they apply it to a phase of pagan or papal Rome.

**“She gave birth to a son, a male child, who ‘will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.’ And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.”<sup>1</sup>**

Jesus was born of a virgin.<sup>2</sup> The woman (God's church) is a virgin. She is the bride-to-be of Jesus. In Matthew 25, the kingdom of heaven (the people of God) was likened to 10 virgins. However, her offspring, the male child, is no ordinary child. The prophecy specifies that He will rule all nations with an iron scepter. This means that the rulership of the male child cannot be broken, for one does not break an iron rod. Read this text and see if you can identify the male child: **“Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.”<sup>3</sup>** There is only one person who can meet these specifications:

1 Revelation 12:5

2 Isaiah 7:14

3 Revelation 19:15

Jesus. Jesus *was* the male child, circumcised on the eighth day.<sup>1</sup>

The Bible says that the male child was snatched up to God and His throne. Again, the Bible says, “**Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven.**”<sup>2</sup> No one other than Jesus can fulfill this specification.

**“The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.”<sup>3</sup>**

John says that after the Devil failed to kill baby Jesus, the Devil then schemed to destroy the woman (God’s people). She ran to the desolate places of earth for 1,260 days. In this instance, a day equals one year because the Jubilee Calendar is operational during this time (Rule 4)

### The Stage Is Set

The first six verses of Revelation 12 set an impressive stage for the next 29 verses that follow. Before moving on, let’s conduct a brief review of symbols and events.

Symbols:

- Woman = bride = saints
- Sun = garment of righteousness
- Moon = marriage covenant
- Crown/12 stars = victory = the elite of the 12 tribes
- Timing = first advent of Jesus
- Dragon = the Devil

Events:

- Dragon attempts to kill the male child.
- Jesus snatched up to God’s throne.
- Dragon chases woman 1,260 years.

Before John continues with the flow of the story, he includes one more detail that is important to its chronology. It’s a detail that most people don’t

1 Luke 2:21

2 Hebrews 8:1

3 Revelation 12:6

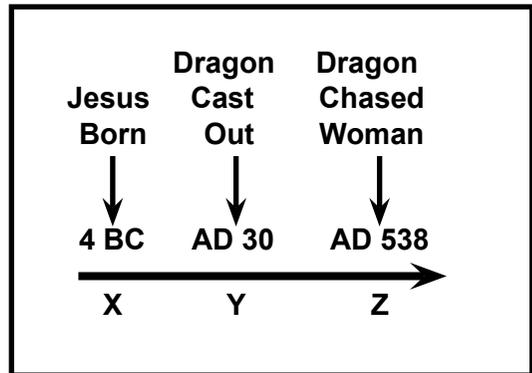
understand. So, John provides another perspective so we can see how the initial description fits into a larger event. Keep in mind that this interruption does not frustrate the flow of the prophecy.

**“Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the Devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”<sup>1</sup>**

This war occurred on Resurrection Sunday. Here’s the evidence right from the Bible.

**“When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.”<sup>2</sup>** When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth—he chased the woman *who had already given birth* to Jesus. We know that Jesus was born in 4 BC, so this text speaks of the Devil being cast out of heaven after 4 BC. Contrary to what many people think, John was not talking about the first expulsion of the Devil from heaven. This is something else. The Bible is written very clearly. When the Devil saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he chased the woman who had already given birth to Jesus.

The next verse says, **“The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach.”<sup>3</sup>** We know from Daniel 7 that the woman’s period of suffering began in AD 538. So, when we put verses 13 and 14 together, we can learn the order of events. When the dragon saw that he was cast out of heaven (Y), he chased the woman (Z) who had already given birth to Jesus (X).



1 Revelation 12:7–9

2 Revelation 12:13

3 Revelation 12:14

John narrowed the timing even further. When the dragon was cast out of heaven, John heard a loud voice from heaven saying, **“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.”**<sup>1</sup> In this verse, the dragon is called the accuser of *our brothers and sisters*. Did you know that angels regard us as siblings? **“At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus.’”**<sup>2</sup>

### Satan Expelled from Heaven

Some people claim that Revelation 12:7–9 refers to the Devil’s expulsion from heaven before the world was created. If this is true, how could angels call the Devil the accuser of *our brothers and sisters* before the world was created? There were no human beings for the Devil to accuse when Lucifer was first cast out of heaven. Remember this text. **“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.’”**<sup>3</sup>

Christ actually paid for salvation the day He died. Read His words. **“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”**

**“Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.’ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.**

**“Jesus said, ‘This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.’”**<sup>4</sup>

Until Calvary, the Devil and his angels could enter heaven (not the Holy City) and he could argue against the salvation of sinners.<sup>5</sup>

1 Revelation 12:10

2 Revelation 19:10

3 Revelation 12:10

4 John 12:27–31

5 Job 1

Satan and his angels taunted God’s holy name because He offered sinful humans another chance for salvation and did not offer defiant angels a *plan of salvation*. So, the Devil and his angels were bitter, and they determined to destroy the ones Jesus loves most: His bride-to-be.

On Resurrection Sunday, Jesus quickly left the tomb and returned to heaven to throw the Devil and his angels out of heaven forever. Their argument against man’s salvation was ended—Jesus had paid the price of salvation in full. Jesus told Mary not to slow Him down because He had to go to His Father and her Father.<sup>1</sup> Jesus raced to heaven, and when His sacrifice was approved, the Father allowed Jesus to cast the Devil out of heaven. Then Jesus threw the Devil and his angels out of heaven faster than the speed of light—a *permanent restraining order*.<sup>2</sup> **“Then I [John] heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They [our accused brothers] triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you [angels in the] heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the Devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short [limited].”**<sup>3</sup>

### The Progression

“When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time [one year], times [two years] and half a time [half a year], out of the serpent’s reach.”<sup>4</sup> When the Devil realized that he had lost his access to heaven, he set out with great anger to destroy the bride, but the woman survives in the desert for 1,260 years (360 + 720 + 180 years in prophetic time, day for a year).

1 John 20:17

2 Luke 10:18

3 Revelation 12:10–12

4 Revelation 12:13–14

The dragon persecutes the woman. . .

**“Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent.”<sup>1</sup>**

The final days of the 1,260 years were marked by bloody warfare against the woman. As Protestantism grew in popularity, so did persecution. This spewing of water out of the dragon’s mouth to overtake the woman refers to sweeping the woman away with the torrents of war and bloodshed. The origin of the language comes from a Psalm of David. **“If the Lord had not been on our side when people attacked us, they would have swallowed us alive when their anger flared against us; the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us.”<sup>2</sup>**

The earth helps the woman. . .

**“But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.”<sup>3</sup>**

As Protestantism grew into a sizeable force and the 1,260 years were ending, God opened a new piece of real estate to help the woman. There is no coincidence between 1776 and 1798. The US Declaration of Independence in 1776, and the fall of the papacy in 1798 were integral to God’s plan, and He revealed this in prophecy. Today, that part of earth that helped the woman is called the United States of America. In 1776, it was called the New World. God had a specific purpose for the US, and indeed, it has uniquely helped the woman. No other nation in the history of mankind has done more for the cause of Christ than the United States. It deeply saddens me today, that this country has lost her former glory because she, like Israel of old, has forgotten her God.

The dragon wages war against the woman. . .

When the Devil saw that the earth helped the woman, **“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.”<sup>4</sup>**

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1 Revelation 12:15

2 Psalm 124:2–4

3 Revelation 12:16

4 Revelation 12:17

The dragon is preparing for war against the remnant. This coming war must occur after 1776 and is described in Revelation 13. Revelation 12:17 is not the end of the prophecy; in fact, the prophecy is just getting started. John did not assign chapter and verse designations to Revelation; so, don't assume that Chapter 13 starts another prophecy, for it doesn't. The story continues uninterrupted into Chapter 13.

In just 17 verses of Revelation 12, John takes us from the birth of Christ to the time of the remnant. So, stay tuned. In Revelation 13, we will investigate what happens to the remnant. Remember, this story is cosmic; that is, it deals with larger issues than just the story of the dragon and the woman. For example, note the comparison.

### **God's Scorecard**

1. God granted the Jews 30 Jubilees of time: they failed.
2. God granted the Christians 36 Jubilees of time: they failed.
3. God granted the Protestants 4 Jubilees of time: they failed.
4. God will grant His Two Witnesses 1,260 literal days: they will accomplish their task.

### **Satan's Scorecard**

1. The Devil challenged Michael in heaven before the world was created. Lucifer lost.
2. The Devil led the world into violent wickedness. Jesus destroyed the world with a flood.
3. The Devil tried to kill baby Jesus. The Devil lost.
4. The Devil tried to keep his place in heaven after Calvary. The Devil lost.
5. The Devil chased the woman into the wilderness for 1,260 years. The Devil lost.
6. The Devil tried to destroy the rise of Protestantism through bloodshed and war. The Devil lost.
7. The Devil is preparing for war on the remnant. Millions of saints will die, but the Devil will lose the war.

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Is there any doubt as to why the Devil is angry with the woman? Christ and Satan will fight over you and me in this final war. John clearly describes this war in Revelation 13:7. **“It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.”** Get ready. This verse includes you.





## Four Beasts – The Dragon-Like Beast

As we continue our study, we need to review two texts from Daniel 8 to appreciate the term, *the appointed time of the end*. Gabriel said something very important about the appointed time of the end to Daniel, **“Son of man . . . understand that the vision concerns the time of the end. . . I am going to tell you what will happen later in the *time of wrath*, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end.”**<sup>1</sup>

### The Coming Time of Wrath

Gabriel indicates there is a period or time of wrath associated with the appointed time of the end. Later in the vision, Gabriel again mentions the time of wrath. Talking about the king of the North, Gabriel said, **“The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the *time of wrath* is completed, for what has been determined must take place.”**<sup>2</sup>

The king of the North is successful until the time of wrath is completed! John wrote about the wrath of Jesus at the second coming, **“Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?’”**<sup>3</sup>

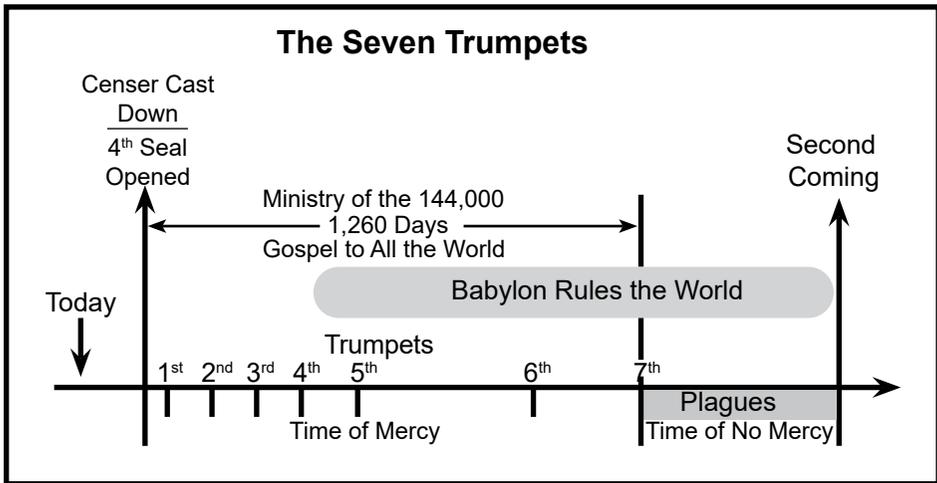
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1 Daniel 8:17, 19

2 Daniel 11:36

3 Revelation 6:15–17

The time of God’s wrath begins when the censer is thrown down. This event *in heaven* is marked by a global earthquake *on earth*.<sup>1</sup> The censer is thrown down in heaven because God’s forbearance with evil on earth, in a corporate sense, has reached its limit. Just as Moses angrily threw down the Ten Commandments written on two tablets of stone when he came down the mountain and saw the wickedness of Israel,<sup>2</sup> so the angel at the Altar of Incense throws down the censer indicating the time for God’s wrath has come. This will mark the opening of the fourth seal. The four winds (sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts) are held back until the 144,000 are selected. The seven trumpets will awaken the people of the world that Jesus is concluding His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.



The *first* seven plagues (or trumpets) are redemptive and mixed with mercy. On the other hand, the seven *last* plagues (or bowls) will occur after the trumpets and all who received the mark of the beast will receive God’s wrath full strength. **“If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.”**<sup>3</sup> This text indicates that at a future time, God’s fury will be poured *full strength* into the cup of His wrath which those who received the mark of the beast will have to drink.

1 Revelation 8:2–5

2 Exodus 32

3 Revelation 14:9–10

During the trumpets, God's fury is not poured full strength upon humanity because the seven *first* plagues are designed to awaken and rescue as many people as possible. However, when everyone has decided for or against the gospel, probation then closes. Everyone on earth will have heard the everlasting gospel and made their decision. At that time, those in opposition to God's authority will have rejected the clearest revelation of His will through His Two Witnesses, God's Law, and the Holy Spirit. At that time, God can do no more to save individuals.

Then, the seven last plagues will fall on the living wicked. These terrible judgments complete God's justified wrath. John says, **"I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed."**<sup>1</sup>

### **The Wrath of God is Warranted**

Revelation states God's wrath will be poured out, full strength, on those who received the mark of the beast. Many Christians today deny that God has wrath and refuse to believe that He will pour it upon human beings. Do not be deceived. God is going to do exactly what He says. He will direct the seven last plagues at those who have the mark of the beast, since they have rejected His sovereignty and extended mercy. All who reject the gospel and disobey God's commands will join the Devil in persecuting God's people. There will be no middle ground.

The wicked will become enraged by the demands of the gospel and many saints will die for their faith. This martyrdom is marked in Revelation by the opening of the fifth seal. **"Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord *from now on*.'**

**"'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.'"**<sup>2</sup> Jesus is a God of justice and observes the suffering of His people. He sees each crime against His children and ensures that justice is served at the right time. God has all the time in the world to administer His justice.

When Jesus imposes the seven last plagues on His enemies, *they* will suffer in the extreme. Finally, He will execute His justice. As terrible as these last seven plagues are, John heard the angel with the third plague saying,

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1 Revelation 15:1

2 Revelation 14:13

**“You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets.”<sup>1</sup>**

Our world has reached the same depth of iniquity as ancient Jerusalem. We only lack a global catalyst to start a chain of horrific events. Right before us is a time of great wrath. We will see people betray and kill one another. We will see a world of unrepentant and rebellious people. Suffering and bloodshed will be much, much worse than during the French Revolution!

Those following Satan will receive God’s wrath, while those following Jesus will receive the Devil’s wrath. No one can escape this time of wrath. Jesus, knowing what the power of the gospel would eventually do to earth, said, **“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”<sup>2</sup>**

### **Surprise Launches a Rapid Reaction**

You must consider the horrific effects of the trumpets to understand why there will be a time of wrath, even a global war against the saints. When the wrath of Jesus breaks out, it will destabilize the entire world. Economic, governmental, social, and religious processes all over the world will change overnight! Leaders will impose contingency laws in just a few hours for this *state of emergency* declared in all quarters of our globe. In just a few days, the people of earth will recognize the judgments to be *acts of God*. In desperation, people in every land will inquire, “What does God want?”

Priest, rabbi, imam, pastor, guru, bishop, clergy witchdoctor, and anyone else who claims to be a spiritual leader will all say the same thing. “God is angry because He is offended by our evil ways!”

The first four trumpets create a global emergency. This emergency unites the interests and hopes of people. In response people will seek a common

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1 Revelation 16:5–6

2 Matthew 10:34–39

solution, for these judgments are not an issue of people against people but rather God against people. Religious and political leaders of earth will quickly respond to seek a common means of appeasing God, for all the world will be hurting. In Revelation, John called this global union to appease God, *Babylon*. It is a confederation of religious and political powers. On the surface, the ecumenical harmony between all the entities of Babylon will appear to be reasonable. After all, everyone will want God's judgments to stop immediately.

Every quadrant of society will claim that repenting and obeying God's will is necessary to appease Him. However, every societal group will have a different view of how to obey God. Muslims obey the Koran. Catholics obey the Pope. Jews obey the Torah. Buddhists obey Buddha's teachings. Protestants claim to obey the Bible, but what does the Bible say? This question will become the most important question in the whole world and the most anxious question ever asked by human beings.

### Peace and Safety

Remember Paul's words. **“Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”**<sup>1</sup>

The sudden destruction described in this text comes as a *surprise* to the world. When the world is focused on its need for global peace and safety—sudden destruction will come from God. Ironic, isn't it? Right now, is there any subject of greater importance than peace? Changes all over the world are occurring much faster than ever anticipated and the need for peace becomes more acute every day. Even though these rapid movements hold the world's attention and interest, most people do not understand that God foretold our need for peace and safety. Even more, Revelation clearly tells how sudden destruction will occur. Like a sudden explosion, the trumpets will shatter the hopes and goals of people all over the world in one moment.

When Jesus completes the sealing of the 144,000, the four angels holding back the four winds will be released and the seven trumpets will begin. You can see from any news story that we stand at the door of an irreversible

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1 1 Thessalonians 5:1–3

countdown of events and global leaders are constantly discussing “peace and safety.”

### Revelation 13 Continues Revelation 12

The story which began in Revelation 12 is continued without interruption in Chapter 13. When John wrote Revelation, he did not divide the story into chapters and verses. That was done later by translators. *The events in Chapter 13 follow Chapter 12 in chronological order.* The war against the remnant that Satan prepares for in 12:17 is described in 13:7.

Remember, Revelation 12 brings us chronologically to the time of the end. In verse 17, Satan is preparing to make war on the last of God’s people. He is enraged because he knows his time is short.

Revelation 13:1–10 describes the meteoric rise of a world power. This world power does not yet exist even though all the elements exist today. As a result of the devastation of the trumpets, this world power will rise and take control of earth. Revelation identifies this future organization as Babylon even though we do not know the actual name it will take. One event is certain, this coming organization will wage war against God’s people for 42 months.

### The Dragon-like Beast

John says, **“The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.”**<sup>1</sup>

Some translators record the text this way. **“And I [John, instead of the dragon,] stood on the shore of the sea.”** The translation problem stems from the translation of a Greek pronoun. This pronoun can be translated as “it” or “I.” However, the context of the verse seems to better support the idea that John was standing on the shore and he saw the beast come out of the sea.

Let’s review the chronological order of the events in Revelation 13.

1. John sees a beast having 7 heads and 10 horns come out of the sea. On each head is a blasphemous name. {v1}
2. This beast not only looks like the dragon of Revelation 12, but it also resembles a leopard with feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion. {v2}

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1 Revelation 13:1

3. The dragon (from Revelation 12) gave the beast his power, throne, and great authority. {v2}
4. One of the beast's 7 heads seemed to have had a fatal wound, but when it rose the fatal wound had been healed. {v3}
5. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. {v3}
6. Men worshiped (obeyed) the dragon because he had given authority to the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against it?" {v4}
7. The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for 42 months. {v5}
8. The beast was given a mouth to vilify God's authority. {v6}
9. The beast was given the power to wage war against the saints and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. {v7}
10. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—except those whose names are in the book of life. {v8}
11. He who has an ear, let him hear. {v9}
12. Those going into captivity will go into captivity and those to be martyred will be martyred. God's people are to remain firm, patient, and faithful. {v10}

### The Transition of the Beast

In Chapter 13, we move from the dragon beast to the *dragon-like* beast. I call this second being the dragon-like beast because he maintains the *form* of the dragon (7 heads and 10 horns), and his *power* comes from the dragon. Think of this beast as a hand puppet. The dragon (the Devil) is the hand inside the dragon-like beast.

The dragon-like beast is not the dragon; rather, the dragon takes on *earthly* characteristics when it comes from the sea. This beast is more than the dragon in Chapter 12. This beast is made up of earthly kingdoms represented by a lion, a bear, and a leopard. These beasts are found in Daniel 7 and this is the final union of remnant nations, multitudes, and languages.

God will allow the lion, bear, leopard, and terrible beast to continue living after they have lost dominion.<sup>1</sup> This is because the dragon-like beast is a composite of the remnant of all peoples, nations, and languages of the

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1 aniel 7:12

world. After the destruction caused by the first four trumpets, the dragon-like beast will quickly rise to power. This organization will be global because Satan's warfare against the saints will be global. Revelation predicts that all inhabitants of earth will worship the beast except the remnant.<sup>1</sup>

### **An Alliance of World Powers**

The 7 heads and 10 horns represent a confederation or alliance of global powers. The 7 heads represent 7 false religious systems and the 10 horns represent 10 political rulers who will appear.

### **Babylon is Temporary**

Contrary to its powerful claims, Babylon, the dragon-like beast, will not last forever! It will be empowered for a maximum time period of 42 months. The saints will have to stand courageously against this mighty foe. They will have to patiently and completely trust in Jesus at this time for they will suffer greatly.<sup>2</sup> This coming time period of persecution is representative of the 1,260 years of persecution experienced by the woman in Revelation 12:6, 14.

### **Babylon Will Return to Great Power**

The world will follow Babylon's directives. Babylon will be most oppressive and all-encompassing. The world has not ever seen anything like this beast. Governments will impose martial law and economic restrictions everywhere due to the state of emergency caused by astounding devastation. They will take away most freedoms from the people overnight. Of course, these events will frighten many people, and it will seem futile to resist these sweeping changes. Most of them will agree that you can't fight the beast, and you can't win.<sup>3</sup> Babylon comes out of the sea which confirms that it comes to power out of nations, multitudes, and peoples. Water represents multitudes of peoples, nations, and languages.<sup>4</sup> The various parts of the beast that comprise Babylon—the lion, bear, and leopard—represent remnant portions of ancient world empires.<sup>5</sup>

When Babylon comes to power, one of the seven heads that had been fatally wounded will be healed. This points forward to the restoration and

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1 Revelation 13:7–8

2 Revelation 13:5–10

3 Revelation 13:4

4 Revelation 17:15

5 Compare Daniel 7:12 with Revelation 13:2.

dominion of the Roman Catholic Church. Just as the pope, the church's leader, ruled for 1,260 years before it was wounded by Napoleon, it will return to great power! The papacy has reached a level of prominence in international policies not seen since its fall in 1798. The deadly wound is nearly healed because the time is almost here!

### **Satan is the Power**

The great red dragon with 7 heads and 10 horns in Revelation 12:3 is the power within the dragon-like beast, Babylon. One way to understand this concept is to think of a person putting his hand in a hand puppet. The power of the puppet comes from the hand within the puppet. Similarly, Satan's evil hand will control the religious and political bodies that make up Babylon and through them, he will lead powerful men to war against the saints.

Satan's objective for Babylon is simply to gain control of the world so that when he appears on earth, people will receive him as almighty God. God will control Satan's activities when he appears during the fifth trumpet.<sup>1</sup> When the Devil arrives, he will use his miracle-working powers to deceive millions of people into joining his efforts to establish a one-world government. Some people will refuse to accept his offer, so Satan will lead his followers into the bloodiest of *holy wars*. The sixth trumpet war unites the followers of the Devil against those resisting his one-world order. By rallying those who believe he is God, the Devil will take control of the world and persecute all who refuse his demands. Satan will take by force what he could not achieve through deception. The last resort of false religion is always force.

The story in Chapter 13 runs parallel with the story of the trumpets and the angels' messages in Revelation 14. (See the apocalyptic chart in the appendix.) Jesus will control the timing of these events. Note the precision of the sixth trumpet: **“And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind.”**<sup>2</sup>

### **Submit or Else**

Revelation 13:8 says, **“All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of**

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1 Revelation 9:1–12

2 Revelation 9:15

**life.”** The Greek word in Revelation 13:8 for worship means to obey, yield, or be submissive. In fact, this word is also associated with the idea of kissing. Eastern cultures today recognize kissing as a gesture of humility and submission. Political leaders in the Middle East often embrace one another with a kiss to signify mutual respect. In this light, Judas’ kiss betraying Jesus in the garden was the height (or depth) of hypocrisy.

The verses of Revelation 12:17 and 13:8 simply divide everyone into one of two camps: All the inhabitants of the world will either submit to Babylon’s laws OR to God’s laws.

### **Babylon’s Rise**

The first four trumpets provide the catalyst to unite the religious systems of the world. Before the trumpets begin, people initially have a false sense of security with political developments of peace and safety. As political and military chaos grows, Jesus will quietly select the 144,000 just before the trumpets begin. Suddenly, when it seems that wars might destroy humanity, the trumpets will begin, and the world will be literally shaken to pieces. During the months of panic that follow, the full gospel message will go throughout the earth announcing that the world is coming to an end, and that Jesus is coming. The 144,000 will proclaim that while Jesus has ended corporate mediation in the heavenly sanctuary, salvation for individuals is still available, but their opportunity for salvation will end very soon.

Panic and fear will immediately displace feelings of security as the infrastructures of society collapse. Health insurance, social security, pensions, and savings will simply disappear. People in every land will turn from political optimism to religious bewilderment. They will rush to their clerics to understand the meaning of the devastation of the trumpets. They will want to know the meaning of these *acts of God*.

Religious leaders will exclaim that the cause is simple: “We have forgotten God. We have done wickedly; therefore, these judgments have come on us. The pursuit of world peace is not enough. He is angry with our sinful ways. We must recognize God’s authority before He will restrain His anger. The only solution is to repent and obey God so He will stop His judgments.” Ironically, many politicians will be among the first to agree. Clerics will advance the notion that political leaders should quickly enact laws requiring righteousness, saying: “Let punishment for wrongdoers be sudden and

swift, lest we all perish.” They will quote Daniel, who said, “**All this disaster has come on us, yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your [His] truth.**”<sup>1</sup>

Around the world, leaders will impose laws requiring immediate reform. Everyone must submit or suffer immediate punishment. What other options are there to end this destruction? Clergy from all religious bodies will unite and form a global organization attempting to appease God and stop the devastation. However, this union of men will be caught in a conflict. How can earth’s people pacify a universal God when their religious systems fundamentally disagree on what God requires? Now begins the great controversy.

Many people will object to the official plans to appease God. Some will argue that righteous legislation does not make saints. At first, those resisting the laws mandated by the global union will fall into two categories: refuseniks and saints. The refuseniks will be many people who are opposed to restrictions of liberty by anyone and they do not accept the gospel of Jesus. They simply refuse to go along with the implementation of sin-less laws based on freedom of conscience. On the other hand, the saints will also be opposed to the legislated reforms because God does not accept *forced* righteousness. He is a God of love, and He only accepts worship from those who cheerfully choose to obey Him. The object of the trumpets is not to force the inhabitants of earth into righteous behavior. If God had wanted to save the world in Noah’s day, He could have closed the door *after* it began to rain. However, salvation either comes on God’s terms or it doesn’t come at all. The saints will also protest the legislation of *righteous laws* because the manmade laws dealing with worshiping God will conflict with the Ten Commandments of almighty God.

### **First Among Equals**

The world will try to appease God so the judgments will stop. This coming religious and political global organization will rapidly develop under the aegis of universal brotherhood and suffering. Since the judgments are global and this is a global problem, all religious systems of earth will be represented; ultimately, the pope will be found to be the only one qualified to serve as chief executive of such a diverse group. The pope has earned the right to be chief executive. The papacy is uniquely qualified to conduct this

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1 Daniel 9:13

work because it alone has diplomatic ties with every major religious and political power in the world. This recognition is the basis for the healing of the deadly wound.

The term Babylon means confusion. Since the religious coalition will be comprised of the world's seven distinct religious systems, you can see that confusion will be unavoidable. For example, Muslims will see the solution to God's wrath differently than Protestants. The Muslim concept of Jesus is quite different than the Christian one. These differences will have to be overlooked in the universal effort to appease God. At this time, everyone will be seeking solutions to end global destruction. Clerics and politicians will unite saying, "We must implore almighty God to stop the judgments!"

### **Babylon's Heads**

What do the 7 heads and 10 horns that make up Babylon represent? John saw a beast with 7 heads and 10 horns three times in Revelation. The first time is recorded in Chapter 12, the second in Chapter 13, and the last in Chapter 17. Revelation carefully maintains this repetitious identity of Satan so that the remnant can understand the work and progression of the Devil's activities. By having a clear picture of what's going on, God gives the saints an explanation of the enemy's disguise and war plans. Let's investigate the seven heads and discover who they represent. Remember, a correct identity of the heads requires that all specifications about the heads be satisfied. Notice the following details about the heads from Chapter 13.

- Each head has a blasphemous name. {v1}
- One of the heads had been wounded and healed. {v3}
- The beast was given a mouth to blaspheme God. {v5}

We learn more about the 7 heads from Chapter 17.

- The seven heads are seven mountains or hills. {v9}
- The seven heads are seven kings. {v10}
- Five heads have fallen. {v10}
- One head is. {v10}
- One head is yet to come. {v10}
- The beast that ascends out of the Abyss will be the eighth king and is a companion of the seven heads. {v8, 11}

### Merging the Specifications

Chapter 13 states that each head has a blasphemous name. This indicates that each head is religious in nature, for each head assumes the prerogatives of God. Also, one of the heads had been wounded but is now healed! This head is, without doubt, Catholicism. The wound to this religious system was inflicted in 1798 when Napoleon captured the pope.<sup>1</sup> When this beast rises, that wound is healed. Incidentally, if this head is Catholicism, then the remaining heads must also represent religious systems.

Chapter 17 describes each head as a mountain or a hill (the Greek word *oros* means either). The symbolism of seven religious bodies as seven hills is not hard to understand from the Bible. Seven represents a complete number, a finished or full count. For example, there are seven colors in the rainbow, seven notes on the musical scale, seven continents, and seven days in a week. In John's day, hills or mountains were reserved as places of worship or for the dwelling of deity. The ancients placed temples or shrines in prominent places high above the terrain because these holy places were believed to be God's dwelling place. The Bible often refers to Israel as *Mount Zion, my holy hill, or my holy mountain*.

Here are a few examples that show the essence of this symbolism from John's perspective. **“Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.”**<sup>2</sup> **“While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the Lord my God for his holy hill.”**<sup>3</sup>

**“I have installed my King on Zion, my holy mountain.”**<sup>4</sup> **“Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?”**<sup>5</sup> **“Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?”**<sup>6</sup>

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1 Daniel 7:25

2 Daniel 9:16

3 Daniel 9:20

4 Psalm 2:6

5 Psalm 15:1

6 Psalm 24:3

“Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand<sup>1</sup>—Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her.”<sup>2</sup>

“On that day you, Jerusalem, will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me, because I will remove from you your arrogant boasters. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill.”<sup>3</sup>

Today, we refer to the official building of the US Congress as *Capitol Hill*. The seven religious systems of the world are symbolized as hills because people *look up to these religious systems for knowledge and understanding of God*.

These seven religious bodies are also seven kings, that is, they have dominion and subjects. People obey and follow their respective religious systems as a means of serving God. For example, Americans have been amazed at the religious zeal and loyalty of Muslims. Many Muslims are committed to Allah in a way that most Protestants cannot understand. However, the most conclusive issue connected with the identification of the heads is timing. John’s attending angel said, “**This calls for a mind with wisdom. . . . Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.**”<sup>4</sup> If we can identify the time when five are fallen, we should be able to determine the identity of these seven heads.

To determine when the five heads are fallen, we need to identify when the conversation occurred between John and the angel. I believe the angel spoke to John about AD 95. So, at that time, five heads had fallen. If this is true, the following explanation can solve the mystery of the heads and meet all the specifications about the heads.

The definition of the word *fallen* means *destroyed or collapsed*; but, in a larger sense, it means *brought down or demonstrated to be false*. (This point is confirmed in the second angel’s message. Revelation 14:8) When we consider the end of the first century, we can discover a simple solution regarding five fallen religious systems. When Jesus became flesh and dwelt among men,

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1 Joel 2:1

2 Joel 3:17

3 Zephaniah 3:11

4 Revelation 17:9–10

five religious systems were *brought down* or *exposed as false*. Jesus' physical presence on earth unmasked man's vain and foolish teachings.

### Five False Religious Systems Exposed

1. Heathenism
2. Atheism
3. Judaism
4. Eastern Mysticism
5. Islam

(Although the title “Islam” today includes the 6th century AD influence of Mohammed, the term Islam is used here to identify the ancient Arabic faith. Even though many Christians believe Mohammed was the founder of Islam, Mohammed *did not* invent a new religion. Rather, he united, organized, and expanded the beliefs of nomadic Arabians. Even though most Muslims consider Mohammed to be the last and greatest of God's messengers, the Arabs trace the origin of their faith back to Ishmael and his 12 sons. Muslims regard Ishmael as the father of their faith, not Mohammed.<sup>1</sup>)

These five religious systems are anti-Christ and Jesus proved them false.

- Heathenism – A religion apart from the knowledge of the true God of heaven. In this system, man creates his own gods according to fantasy or whim.
- Atheism – Denies the existence of the God of heaven and His claims upon man.
- Judaism – Rejects the claims of Jesus as the Messiah and seeks salvation through obedience and ceremonies.
- Eastern Mysticism – Teaches that man can become God.
- Islam – Denies that Jesus is the Son of God.

The angel also told John that one head “is,” and that one “is yet to come.” The *new* head or religious system that began in John's day was Christianity. Christianity existed for a thousand years, but it later transformed into what is now called Catholicism. John was a charter member of that new religious system and this is why the angel said “one is.” We have already studied

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1 Genesis 21:13

how Christianity rose and fell as Satan gained control of it. By 1798, the Reformation produced a newer head or religious system that would exist for “a little while.” This system is known as Protestantism. Looking back over the landscape of history, Protestantism is a *newcomer* to the religious world in terms of existence since it is only five centuries old. The other six religious systems are twenty or more centuries old.

So, with the last two of the seven heads added, the seven heads represent.

1. Heathenism
2. Atheism
3. Judaism
4. Eastern Mysticism
5. Islam
6. Catholicism
7. Protestantism

### Review

Can you think of any person on earth who is not included in this list of seven religious systems? Are all specifications about the heads satisfied with these conclusions? Have we followed the rules of apocalyptic interpretation? Rule 1 tells when the beast arises. Rule 2 tells the time we are in the chronology. Rule 3 explains the meaning of the symbols. So, given the list above, consider the following questions.

- Are the seven heads blasphemous? Do they teach principles contrary to God’s Word?
- One of the heads was wounded, but the deadly wound is healed when the dragon-like beast comes from the sea. Wasn’t head number six, the papacy, injured in 1798, but hasn’t it been rapidly returning to power?
- Do people of the world look up to their religious system as speaking for God? Does the representation of seven hills fit in this context?
- Do people obey their religious system? Does this make each religious system a king with subjects?
- Were five religious systems exposed as false the day Jesus was born?
- Did John belong to the sixth religious system which later apostatized?

### The Eighth King

When Satan appears on earth claiming to be God, he will set himself above these seven kings and thus become the eighth and greatest king.<sup>1</sup> According to 2 Thessalonians 2:4 and Daniel 11:36, he will set himself up over the seven heads and claim to be everyone's God.

The reason the Devil is called the eighth king is interesting. Remember when the little horn rose in Daniel 7 and plucked up three horns by the roots? The little horn became the eighth horn and it ruled over the remaining seven horns with complete authority. The parallel in Revelation 17 is identical. The Devil will appear and rule over the seven heads with greater authority than all of them.

Many people will dislike the Devil's actions, but they will be powerless to stop him. Paul says, **“Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”**<sup>2</sup>

### The 10 Horns

Horns in prophecy represent kings. Remember the horns on the ram and goat in Daniel 8? The 10 horns represent 10 kings (also symbolized by the 10 toes of Daniel 2) who will give their authority to Satan after he has conquered the world during the sixth-trumpet war. Since millions of people on earth will regard the Devil as God, the seven religious systems will unite with Satan so he can establish a one-world government. He will divide the world into 10 sectors. At that time, the Devil will install his 10 kings over the world's political affairs.

Today, seven industrialized nations belong to an economic block that deals with global trade and financial issues. For many years this group was known as the G-7. It included Canada, Italy, West Germany, France, the United States, Japan, and Great Britain. While the members have changed over the years, the purpose remains the same. The G-7 organization is a *type* of the coming union of the 10 kings. The Bible doesn't name these 10 kings who will appear during the sixth trumpet, and in fact, says very little

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1 Revelation 17:11

2 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

about them. However, I anticipate Satan will divide the world during the great war of the sixth trumpet. Then the spoils will be divided and given to 10 kings. Satan will set up these kings, actually his pawns, because they went along with his schemes of conquering the world.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of just how the 10 will be established, we shall soon see who they are!

Satan will take great advantage of the whirlwind changes that we are seeing all over the world. He is preparing to take over the world and wage war on the saints. He will align the world's religious systems and political powers into a giant confederation. He will gain complete control of the world. He will force people to obey him, and ultimately focus his wrath on all who resist him. He will be especially angry with God's people who powerfully, plainly, and scripturally demonstrate that he is not the *Lamb of God*, but an imposter. In fact, the dragon-like beast of Chapter 13 has a strong ally. It is the *lamb-like* beast that appears during the fifth trumpet. The Devil will speak like a lamb at first, but he will end up speaking as a dragon.

### Summary

The rise of the dragon-like beast is in response to the devastation of the first four trumpets. The seven heads of the dragon-like beast represent the seven false religious systems of the world. The papacy will lead in establishing and uniting this international organization. It will compel legislative assemblies to enact laws to respect God. This will be most confusing. However, the confusion will be greatly reduced when the Devil appears and merges all seven systems into one great image. The Devil will then control the world and will inflict a great deal of martyrdom on the saints through his false religions.

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1 Daniel 11:39



# Four Beasts – The Devil Appears

Thus far, we have investigated the identities of the Lamb, the dragon, and the dragon-like beasts.

We learned about the following symbols.

- The Lamb = Jesus
- The Dragon = The Devil
- The Dragon-like = Babylon
- Seven Heads = Atheism, Heathenism, Eastern Mysticism, Judaism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism
- Ten Horns = Ten kings who will begin to rule over the earth during the sixth trumpet

Now, we will begin our investigation of the fourth beast, the lamb-like beast.

Remember, the title belonging to the dragon-like beast, Babylon, fittingly describes this beast because cultural and religious diversities cannot be merged by human power. They can only be mixed, even if they live side by side for 3,000 years. In other words, it is not humanly possible to combine the seven religious systems of the world into one global religion. For example, Muslims have little in common with Protestants.

But the Devil will merge all religions. Through his miracle-working powers, he will deceive billions who will think that he is the God of heaven. He will proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is now among men and that he is here to usher in a seventh millennium of peace.

### The Devil Appears

The fifth trumpet is the appearing of the Devil.<sup>1</sup> Because the world will be a heap of ruins after the first four trumpets, he will appear at a perfect time for what he intends to do. He will appear here, there, and everywhere, claiming to be God. He will claim to be the Savior of the world and millions of desperate people will receive him as God. After all, what do they have to lose?

The Devil, through miracles and signs, will convince leaders the world over that he is almighty God. Religious leaders will quickly endorse him and seek his favor. In this context, he will begin to merge the seven heads into one global confederation or one-world body. He will use skillful manipulation and many signs and miracles to create this confederation. Hundreds of millions of people will believe he is God when they see his miracles.

### War

After the Devil has gained many followers, he will manipulate religious and political leaders into believing there can be a one-world government under his reign. At a prescribed moment, the Devil will suddenly move to take control of the world. He will ignite a civil world war in every quadrant. Americans will be fighting Americans. Russians will be fighting Russians. The French will be fighting the French. At stake is the control of each government. This is the sixth trumpet world war.

The Devil's plan is to first use deception, then force. During the sixth trumpet, Satan will establish a universal command and control center that will allow him to have control over all the people of earth. Revelation 13:14 identifies this coming one-god/one-religion/one-world union as the *image of the beast* and Revelation 17:1 calls this union the *great prostitute*.

### The Image

The consolidation of the world's religious systems is an image of the dragon-like beast because it will be a copy of something that already exists. Since everyone on earth already belongs to one of the seven religious systems, after the Devil appears, he will insist that the seven systems be merged. He will take a piece of the *doctrine* from each system and form a

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1 Revelation 9:1–11

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new one-world system. This is why John wrote that it is an image of the first beast in Revelation 13.

The Bible also says that the image is set up in *honor* of the first beast. The Devil will lead the people of earth to think that this one-world union is the fulfillment and destiny of all seven religions of the world. World leaders will honor the religious systems that made the image possible by implementing the chosen doctrines from each religious system. Thus, the image is a consolidation scheme that the Devil will use to destroy the saints.

This one-world union will instigate a rebellion against the gospel and war against the saints. This war and rebellion will be more intense than Babylon's actions before Satan arrived on earth. So, the basic difference between the *image of Babylon* and Babylon itself is the worldwide consolidation under the image.

Babylon, in its initial state, will be diverse due to religious differences and cultural backgrounds, whereas the image is consolidated and better united (at least temporarily). According to Revelation, the only difference between Babylon and its image is power. Both are rebellious toward God and are exceedingly corrupt. Since the image is the final apostasy of the world on a global stage, it has greater power than the diversity of Babylon.

Remember, the image is the one-world church/state the Devil will design. He will take doctrines and policies from diverse cultures and religions, and weave these together to form the image that meets the needs of all the groups. Initially, political/religious leaders will establish laws consistent with the prevailing religion within the nations they govern. For example, the US would implement a law requiring Sunday as a universal day of worship. Muslim nations would set Friday as their day of worship and the modern nation of Israel would select Saturday as its holy day of worship. During this time, every nation on earth will enact and enforce sin-less laws forbidding sinful behavior in a desperate effort to appease God's wrath so He will cease His judgments.

### **The Prostitute**

In Revelation 17, John presents a dual identity of the image as a filthy woman. This depiction reveals a good deal more about the character of the image. A prostitute is a woman who has exchanged her virtue and moral

integrity for something of perceived value. She has no loyalty, selling herself to the highest bidder. Prostitution is a deep pit. In it, all that matters is money, power, glory, or fame. What makes a prostitute detestable is that she exchanges her soul for these temporal prizes. She may be outwardly beautiful and greatly desired, but her attraction is short-lived; and when her lovers abandon her, they do so with disgust.

The image and the prostitute are the same entity. In Revelation 13, John used the word *image* so we can understand that the Devil's one-world religion will *look like* the false religious systems he merges. In Revelation Chapters 17 and 18, he used the symbolism of a prostitute to describe the one-world union so we can understand the willful exchange of religious values to survive. Religious and political leaders and billions of their followers will abandon their sacred religious beliefs which they have claimed for centuries to represent the truth about God. They will intentionally join the Devil to access power, money, or survival. This sounds like a fairy tale and, were it not for the prophecy of Revelation, totally unbelievable. Nevertheless, these events are just before us.

### **The Dragon / The Dragon-like Beasts**

The seven-headed, ten-horned beasts described in Revelation 12, 13, and 17 follow a specific progression. In Chapter 12, the red dragon is the Devil. In Chapter 13, the dragon-like beast, now having *earthly* beast features, is the Devil's hand puppet, even though it is diverse. In Chapter 17, the dragon-like beast is the Devil's final product. Here, the prostitute, the Devil's church/state entity, rides on the religious and political leaders of the world. She controls or directs the dragon-like beast's activities because she is now in charge. Because Satan can disguise himself "as an angel of light,"<sup>1</sup> God has provided a way for us to correctly identify the progressive activities and works of Satan as end-time events unfold.

### **The Lamb-like Beast**

Now we come to the most important and most powerful beast in Revelation's study. The following details are presented in Revelation 13.

1. This beast comes out of the earth. It has two horns like the lamb but speaks like the dragon. {v11}

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1 2 Corinthians 11:14

2. At first, the lamb-like beast uses his powerful influence on behalf of the dragon-like beast (Babylon) having 7 heads and 10 horns. This means that when he appears, the lamb-like beast supports the varied responses to appease God, mandated by the 7 heads in their respective nations. When he is in Israel, he will encourage the Jews to obey their religious leaders. When in America, he will encourage the Americans to obey their leaders. By doing this, the lamb-like beast will gain the confidence and support of the leaders of each religious system. {v12} Later, the lamb-like beast will demand a one-world church/state.
3. The lamb-like beast will perform great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of people to convince them of his divinity. This miracle will convert thousands of agnostics in a split second. {v13}
4. The lamb-like beast will deceive billions on earth with his miracles which he does on behalf of the dragon-like beast. {v14}
5. The lamb-like beast will *order* the inhabitants of earth to set up an image in *honor* of Babylon to initiate the war of the sixth trumpet. (It is customary to honor something or someone who has passed away.) In setting up the image, the lamb-like beast will honor the false religious systems that made the image possible by incorporating a universal set of false doctrines. {v14}
6. The lamb-like beast will give life to the image, causing it to speak and make laws whereby all who refuse to worship it will be killed. {v15}
7. The lamb-like beast will force everyone on earth to receive a mark on their right hand or forehead. {v16}
8. Those without the mark cannot buy or sell. {v17}
9. The mark will contain the name or the number of the lamb-like beast {v17}
10. The number of the lamb-like beast is a number of man. It is 666. {v18}

If you do not have a predisposition about the lamb-like beast's identity already, the name reveals who it is. Jesus is called the Lamb 30 times in Revelation, and the lamb-like beast is the arch-rival of Jesus. Consider the following points and notice how they connect to reveal that the lamb-like beast has to be the Devil masquerading as the Lamb of God upon earth.

### 1. This Beast Will Come from the Earth

The lamb-like beast is the only one in either Daniel or Revelation who comes from the earth, not the sea. This beast will not come from people, multitudes, nations, and languages, and it does not need them for power.

John gave no description of this beast other than it had two horns like a lamb. In the Greek, the noun for lamb in Revelation 13:11 has no article such as “a” or “the.” In English, *a* lamb and *the* lamb have different meanings. Often the Greek language will omit the article if the noun is obviously known or previously identified. In other words, I believe the Greek syntax supports the idea that John saw a beast coming out of the earth and it looked like *the Lamb* of God, but it only had two horns, whereas the Lamb of God had seven. Compare Revelation 13:11 with Revelation 5:6.

Even if you disagree with my grammatical point, consider this. Why would John ignore the entire appearance of this beast when describing that its two horns looked like a lamb? A literal Greek translation would read, “Then I saw another beast coming out of the earth, and it had two horns like lamb, and it spoke like dragon.” Again, notice the missing article before the word dragon.

I believe the contrast in Revelation 13:11 between Jesus, as “the Lamb,” and this beast, having two horns like the Lamb, is obvious and intentional. Since the Devil is going to appear on earth claiming to be God, it makes sense to contrast the lamb-like beast against the Lamb. When Satan appears on earth in his assumed role as God, the caricature of his being *lamb-like* at first will be most appropriate.

John says this beast “looked lamb-like but spoke like a dragon!” We can observe the contrast because John has already introduced and identified the dragon. Its harmless appearance and its dragon-like speech are direct opposites. The Devil’s appearance is designed to deceive, and his ability to speak indicates that he will make cruel laws to destroy the saints. Perhaps the reason John does not provide more detail about the appearance of this beast is that he immediately recognized who it was.

John introduced us to the Devil’s appearing earlier in Revelation as the angel from the Abyss.<sup>1</sup> John also knew that the beast from the

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1 Revelation 9:1–11

Abyss would kill the Two Witnesses.<sup>1</sup> Note the origin of the lamb-like beast. John said the lamb-like beast will come “out of the earth.” John inferred that coming out of the earth and coming out of the Abyss are similar in the following text.

**“The beast, which you saw, once was [visible], now is not [visible], and yet will come up out of the Abyss [and be visible to the people on earth] and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was [visible], now is not [visible], and yet will come [visibly appear before the people of earth].”<sup>2</sup>**

There are only four beasts mentioned in the book of Revelation. The *Lamb* is in heaven. The *dragon* was cast into the earth. The *dragon-like* (Babylon) comes out of the sea. The *lamb-like* comes out of the earth. Thus, the only beast who can come out of the Abyss is the lamb-like beast. **“The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the Devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”<sup>3</sup>** The Devil was hurled *into* the earth and the lamb-like beast comes *out* of the earth! The Greek word *eis* translated as “to the earth” primarily means “into the earth.”

Consider these three texts: **“The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss.<sup>4</sup> They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon (that is Destroyer).”<sup>5</sup> “And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.”<sup>6</sup>**

From these texts, we learn that the *angel king* is released from the Abyss during the fifth trumpet and *the dragon* is returned to the Abyss

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1 Revelation 11:7

2 Revelation 17:8

3 Revelation 12:9

4 Revelation 9:1

5 Revelation 9:11

6 Revelation 20:1–2

after Christ's second coming. So, the Devil, who was once visible in John's vision, was cast into the Abyss of earth and is now confined to invisibility. Soon, God is going to let him physically appear to the people of earth. Most of the world will be astonished when they see this creature. He is an evil and wicked destroyer even though he will appear to be a dazzling being of great glory. Then, after the second coming, Jesus will return the Devil to the Abyss for 1,000 years.

The lamb-like beast does not come out of any existing kingdom of earth—he just appears out of nowhere! Interestingly, all the beasts in Daniel and the seven-headed, ten-horned beast of Revelation 13 come out of the water. While we know that water represents people, multitudes, and nations, the lamb-like beast does not come out of water *for he does not need people, multitudes, and nations as the source of his strength*. He comes out of the earth. This beast is the archrival of Jesus in Revelation's story. The lamb-like beast is more powerful and influential than the seven-headed, ten-horned, dragon-like beast, Babylon.

The irony of the final conflict is that the two angel kings—Michael the Lamb and Lucifer, the *lamb-like*—will again do battle. The wicked followers of Lucifer will war with the saints of Michael. There will be much loss of life. Even though Satan will win the battle for a time, he will lose in the end and his defeat will be complete.

## 2. None of the Beasts are Nations

The lamb-like beast will have power that exceeds the dragon-like beast, for it will make the earth and its inhabitants worship the dragon-like beast. This fact alone makes it impossible for the lamb-like beast to be a particular nation on earth. According to Daniel 2, one nation will not rule the world again. One nation can never again be greater than the sum of all the others.

In 1699, many prophetic expositors in Europe wondered if the lamb-like beast could possibly be the emerging new world, the land of America. They built their reasoning on the idea that beasts in the book of Daniel were nations, so the lamb-like beast of Revelation must be an empire. Many Protestants brought this idea with them when they settled America. Then, in the 1830's, Baptist evangelist, William Miller,

reached the conclusion that the end of the world was imminent. So, they reasoned that if the world was going to end about 1844, then Daniel and Revelation would have to be fulfilled before 1844. In this context, they searched the prophetic positions of reformation writers and even recent history to find events that could be used to satisfy the prophetic passages of Daniel and Revelation.

Reviewing the disappointment of 1844 is a lot like visiting a great convention hall after the convention has ended and the delegates have gone. All the fixtures are still present, but now that the party is over, the decorations and materials lying on the floor are worthless. So, after the 1844 disappointment, most Protestants abandoned their prophetic positions. However, God had a purpose for these events. We learned from our study of the seven seals that God intended for a special group of people to gather the pieces and discover the importance of 1844. They would carry the judgment-hour message of the third seal throughout the earth. Their work continues to this day.

The judgment-hour message isn't the end of the story. Many prophecies in the books of Daniel and Revelation still await fulfillment. In these final days of earth's history, Bible students are learning more about the meaning of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. For some, this requires unlearning many preconceptions so greater truths can be learned. Now that the whole world is about to experience the Great Tribulation, God is revealing from Daniel and Revelation what calamities are coming so His people can prepare.

In Revelation's story, none of the four beasts will be nations. The dragon-like beast consists of 7 religious systems and 10 political powers, but the beast is the conglomerate, Babylon. While the USA is a superpower in the world today, its day of humility is soon to come. We are going to experience a financial collapse that will make historical implosions mild by comparison.

Since we know the first beast represents the religious and political powers of the whole world, it is interesting that when Satan first arrives, he will encourage the world to worship according to their respective religious systems. The Bible says that the Devil acts on behalf of the first beast. In other words, to gain followers, Satan will *use* the fallen religious systems to his advantage. When he has gathered enough support, he will

change the process and force the earth to establish a consolidated religious system. This is how Satan will become the eighth king over earth.

### 3. The Lamb-like Beast Will Perform Miracles

The lamb-like beast will gain control of many people through his deceptive miracle-working powers. His most convincing miracle will be to command fire to come down out of heaven in full view of men.

Fire has been called from heaven on a few occasions. Once at Mt. Carmel, Elijah prayed that God would demonstrate that He was stronger than Baal by sending fire from heaven to burn up the sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> Later, fire came down from heaven at Elijah's request and consumed 102 soldiers who refused to believe he was a prophet of God.<sup>2</sup> When Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple, fire came from heaven and consumed the burnt offerings to signify the approval of God.<sup>3</sup> The power to call fire from heaven will be an overwhelming deception calculated to mislead those who know nothing about the Bible. Even worse, this ability will serve as confirmation that the Devil is a god. People will fall prostrate at the feet of Satan saying, "Who can do such mighty works but God?"

### 4. Satan Will Deceive Many

As mentioned before, Satan orders the inhabitants of the earth to set up an image to Babylon when he has gained enough power. And when the image is set up, Satan decrees that all who refuse to worship the image are to be killed. This image is the consolidation of Babylon's religious systems. Remember, Babylon has 7 heads and 10 horns. Babylon is diverse and multinational. Satan wants a *one-world* government. In other words, Satan sets up a universal coalition representing all religious and political powers of earth. This body shall create laws and inflict severe injury upon all refusing to obey its decrees. The image of Babylon is simply a global church/state and the Devil will be its high priest and king.

### 5. Satan Will Implement the Mark of the Beast

Most of the world's people will accept the mark of the lamb-like beast to survive. Without the mark, no one, anywhere in the world, can buy or sell. How does Satan achieve this?

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1 1 Kings 18

2 2 Kings 1

3 2 Chronicles 7

When Satan arrives on earth, the world will be suffering greatly from the effects of the first four trumpets. All infrastructures will have been devastated. The planet will be mortally wounded because of such great destruction. To stabilize what remains of the world economy, leaders of their respective nations will implement rationing. Satan only needs to deceive those controlling the laws of rationing to obtain control of the economic systems of the world. By using severe sanctions against weaker nations, Satan will achieve global control over the economy of the world. All governments will have to cooperate or there will be total ruin. Think of the horrific consequences of refusing to go along with the system. What if the Middle East couldn't sell its oil? What if Japan could not export its goods? What if America could not buy oil or Japanese products? What about the most critical product of all: food? Satan will use the current global economic dependence between the nations to establish demonic control.

People will not be able to buy or sell anywhere on earth unless they obey the Devil's laws. As people agree to cooperate, they will receive a permit to buy and sell. This permit will be imprinted on the hand or the forehead. This is the mark of the beast. Those refusing the permit will have no earthly means of support. Those standing for Jesus will not be able to pay their rent, buy food or meet even the barest necessities of life. This is the demonic plan of Satan. This is the test of faith that God wants, for He will provide for His children in the most wonderful ways.

I am convinced that the mark on the forehead or hand is a visible tattoo. Tattoos are non-transferable. Tattoos are simple to implement and they are universal. They will work as well throughout the billions in China as in India. Tattoos also deface the body. From ancient times, tattoos have been used as a visible mark.<sup>1</sup>

What a time of wrath! The only way the remnant will survive is by faith in the promises of God. This condition forces everyone into one of two camps: those who obey the Devil for survival or those who obey God because they trust in Him.

Many who know what is right but are unwilling to live by faith, will join the camp of the enemy out of necessity. On the other hand, those

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1 Genesis 4:15; Exodus 13:9, 16

who know what is right, even though they may have been hardened criminals, and are willing to live by faith will be saved. Thus, “the just shall live by faith.” Jesus asked His disciples, **“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”**<sup>1</sup>

This is the final exam of earth. The issue that will separate and polarize the people of earth is faith in God. Faith is easy to talk about, easy to define, and easy to understand. However, living by faith and facing an insurmountable wall day after day is altogether another matter. Jesus is leading His children today in small steps. He tests us in small ways to see if we are willing to live by faith, so that when the final exam comes, we are prepared.

## 6. Satan Will Have the Number 666

The lamb-like beast has a name. It is a man’s name. The number of the name is 666.

Revelation doesn’t reveal the name Satan takes when he appears. In fact, Revelation doesn’t tell us the name Jesus takes when He appears. **“His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.”**<sup>2</sup> Angels call him Michael. Human beings call him Jesus. But, at the second coming, Jesus will take a new name that we do not know. If Satan knew that name, he would steal it and use it to make his deception even more secure.

The Devil’s name will be associated with the number 666 since God has ordained it. Even though no one knows the name the Devil will use, billions of people already know about the stigmatism of 666. Billions of people will deliberately receive this number on their foreheads or hands *knowing* that it is the mark of the Antichrist to survive. Is this a prostitution of one’s beliefs?

Over the centuries, various methods have been used to interpret the meaning of the number 666. Some people believe that the number represents a period of time. Others suggest that it is a representative symbol of the Antichrist. Still others maintain the number is a derivative of Roman numerals for each letter in a leader’s name. Protestants took

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1 Luke 18:8

2 Revelation 19:12

the Latin title of the pope, *Vicarious Filii Dei*, which is taken to mean, *in place of the Son of God*, to arrive at the number 666. Many Protestants still believe the pope is the Antichrist of Revelation 13. The problem with this view is that there are many names that add up to 666. However, remember Rule 2 of prophetic interpretation states that all specifications of a prophecy must be met to declare it is fulfilled. The pope belongs to one of the seven heads. He cannot be the lamb-like beast, neither can the papacy be the dragon-like beast.

The number 666 is found in the Old Testament. Solomon received 666 talents of gold (about 25 tons) per year from his kingdom as a royalty.<sup>1</sup> I believe the number 666 in Revelation is literal, not symbolic, and it will clearly reveal that a person is participating in the Devil's coming one-world order. Soon, we will know just how the details fit. So, this number, along with all the other specifications of Revelation 13:11–18 will be a positive indication that the world is really following the Devil.

With the logistical needs during this time, Satan will likely divide the people of earth into groups of 1,000 people for rations and administrative control. There is biblical precedent for dividing groups of people into groups of 1,000.<sup>2</sup> In the wilderness, Moses divided the children of Israel into units of 1,000. **“He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times.”**<sup>3</sup>

Lucifer will use this effective tool during the primitive circumstances of the Great Tribulation. I believe the Devil will select one person from each group of 1,000 to serve as a leader, leaving 999 people in each group. The devil will tell the world that 666 people (two-thirds) of each group can avoid death by voluntarily accepting his mark on their right hand. This decree will force the wicked to make their final decision and accept the tattoo to survive. The tattoo showing “666” on the right hand will be physical evidence showing that the wearer is loyal to the Devil's counterfeit theocracy and is eligible to buy and sell the necessities to stay alive. The remaining one-third will be targeted for murder and will be killed as quickly as they can be found.

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1 2 Chronicles 9:13

2 Numbers 31:48–54; Deuteronomy 1:15; 1 Samuel 22:7; and 1 Chronicles 27:1

3 Exodus 18:25–26

Satan will physically appear on earth as a dazzling being. Paul says, **“And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”**<sup>1</sup> Few mortal beings have ever seen anything that will compare to the glory that will surround Satan. His appearance is designed to deceive. His actions, at first, will seem generous and gracious. He will heal the sick and show concern for the poor. Billions will see him perform wonderful and extravagant miracles. Satan will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There will be a high price for all his kindness and benevolence. He will make great demands. As time passes, his demands on people will become very hard, even dragon-like.

### **Satan, a Man?**

As Jesus became a *man* to save the world, the Devil will become a *man* to destroy it. The Bible refers to Satan’s appearing as a man. Speaking of Satan’s destruction at the end of the millennium, Isaiah said, **“Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: ‘Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a wilderness, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?’”**<sup>2</sup>

Ezekiel said of Satan, **“In the pride of your heart you say, ‘I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god in the heart of the seas.’ But you are a mere mortal and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god.”**<sup>3</sup>

These two verses explain that the Devil is regarded as human even though he is more than a human. In like manner, we think of Jesus as a man, but He is much more than just a man.

Paul calls the Devil the *man* of lawlessness. **“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day [the second coming] will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, and will even set himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”**<sup>4</sup> **“Then the lawless one will be revealed,**

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1 2 Corinthians 11:14–15

2 Isaiah 14:16–17

3 Ezekiel 28:2

4 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4

**whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”<sup>1</sup>** Paul comments that the second coming occurs *after* the man of lawlessness is exposed. This means that Satan opposes and exalts himself over all that is called God on the earth. The people of the world will recognize him as greater than the God of Islam, Catholicism, Baptists, Methodists, or other religions.

Satan will appear with all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders to deceive those who are perishing. Tragically, many people would rather base their faith on miracles than God’s Word—the Bible. They would rather believe in one who can perform miracles than use their reasoning powers to understand God’s will. Satan will use signs and wonders to gain control over the world. The only way he can be stopped is by Jesus’ intervention. Lucifer and Michael will soon meet face to face at the second coming. At that time, Satan’s glorious body (apparition) will be destroyed by the splendor of Christ’s glory!

Paul identifies the Devil as the man of lawlessness because Satan will implement many cruel laws. It seems strange that the lawless one would make many laws, but his laws will be arbitrary and evil. Satan’s laws will be like the laws of Hitler during World War II—without virtue or redeeming value. Don’t be deceived. Just as Jesus was more than a man, the Devil will be more than a man. The difference between them is vast. Satan, the man-god, destroyer, and lawless one will bring death and suffering whereas Jesus brings life.

### **A Temporary End**

At Jesus’ second coming, He will destroy Satan’s forces and great world system. He will no longer be free to appear on earth in the form of a man, and the apparition that he used to appear as a man will be incinerated in the lake of fire that destroys Babylon.

John tells us that the dragon-like beast and the false prophet will be thrown alive into the lake of fire at the second coming!<sup>2</sup> The dragon-

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1 2 Thessalonians 2:8–10

2 Revelation 19:20

like beast is Babylon which has seven heads and 10 horns, and the false prophet is its great spokes-partner, the lamb-like beast. The false prophet is another description of the lamb-like beast.<sup>1</sup> The reason that the Devil is identified as the false prophet at the second coming is that he will face God's 144,000 *true prophets* who fearlessly revealed his identity during their time of testimony.

Ironically, Satan's greatest demonstration of power will be the very means by which he will be destroyed. At the second coming, Jesus will *call fire down from heaven* to demonstrate His sovereign power and this fire will consume Babylon and the false prophet!<sup>2</sup> At that time, Babylon will be completely and finally destroyed. Those not destroyed in the lake of fire will be left to rot upon the face of the earth.<sup>3</sup>

### The Finale

In John's vision, after the second coming, he saw an angel come down from heaven with the key to the Abyss, and Satan was thrown into the Abyss and locked up for 1,000 years. With all the wicked slain and the righteous in heaven, Satan will be confined to the spirit world again for 1,000 years. Before Jesus executes final judgment on Satan and the wicked, He wants the righteous to understand His judgment for each person. Thus, the saints will spend 1,000 years reviewing and confirming the decisions Jesus made about each person.

John said, **"I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years."**<sup>4</sup>

The saints will determine the amount of punishment due each of the wicked during the 1,000 years. While thugs like Hitler may think they have escaped the punishment for their crimes, they have yet to face their victims and God's justice. God is going to arrange this meeting. Imagine

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1 Compare Revelation 19:20 with 13:13–14.

2 Revelation 18:8

3 Revelation 19:21

4 Revelation 20:4

the surprise of the wicked as they watch their evil deeds fully exposed to the hosts of heaven and earth.

At the end of the thousand years, Jesus will return to earth with the Holy City and the saints, and He will resurrect the wicked. Every eye will see New Jerusalem. Then, Jesus will *loose* Satan from the spirit world for a short time, and the Devil will incite billions of wicked people to capture the Holy City. As the angry mob rushes toward the city, Jesus will stop them and show each wicked person the Plan of Salvation as it relates to their life from a giant panoramic scene in the sky. At the end of the drama, everyone will acknowledge that God has been fair. Then, the seventh seal on the Book of Life will be opened, and everyone will see that the Devil's charges against God were always false. God does not manipulate His subjects. Everybody has chosen their destiny. As the wicked realize their loss, indescribable agony will overwhelm them, and they will turn on each other with demonic rage. Jesus will call fire from heaven for the last time and will burn all angel and human sinners up.

Malachi wrote, **“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,”** says the Lord Almighty. **‘Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,”** says the Lord Almighty.”<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

This concludes our study on the beasts of Revelation. We have learned the lamb is Jesus. The dragon is the Devil. The dragon-like beast is Babylon and the lamb-like beast is the physical appearance of the Devil for a short time. The 7 heads are 7 false religious systems of the world, and the 10 horns are 10 kings of Satan who will rule over the earth beginning with the sixth trumpet.

The greatest drama of all ages will begin soon. The fourth seal will soon be opened, and everyone will see the wrath of God because the trumpets

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1 Malachi 4:1–3

are about to blow. The four winds will be released. The 144,000 will be ready and most of the world will be caught by complete surprise.

One element is certain. When the censer of Revelation 8:2–5 is cast down, an irreversible sequence of events will lead to the physical appearing of Jesus. May God help us to be ready; for ready or not, He is coming!



## The Faith of Jesus – Following God’s Commands

We have learned that Jesus will specially choose 144,000 people (like the first apostles). He will give these extraordinary individuals the responsibility to proclaim the everlasting gospel. They are God’s finest representatives on earth. **“Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.”**<sup>1</sup>

The 144,000 will have a unique experience so no one else can identify with or sing about what they alone will go through. This is why Jesus gives them the great responsibility of teaching the everlasting gospel. They will speak the truth—no lie was found in their mouths. They will be pure in heart, for they are not defiled with immoral behavior.

They will suffer for the cause of Jesus in ways most people don’t understand. Consider the difference between parents and children during World War II. Children suffered at the moment, while parents suffered from a larger knowledge. Parents worried about the outcome of the war, their children, and the future. Parents had larger concerns than children and suffered in proportion to their concerns. They simply had more to worry about.

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1 Revelation 14:1–5

The call to be an apostle, prophet, teacher, or evangelist of the everlasting gospel is the most encompassing responsibility ever put upon a human being. The accountability that goes with the calling and selection is beyond the scope of most people's understanding. Jesus understood this responsibility. He read, **"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind."**<sup>1</sup> The apostle Paul also grasped his accountability. **"For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"**<sup>2</sup>

The 144,000, like Jesus, will have the Lord's Spirit on them, and like Paul, they will be compelled to preach the everlasting gospel contained in the Scriptures. The power of the Two Witnesses (God's Law and the Holy Spirit) will enable the 144,000.

The 144,000 will be the firstfruits of the harvest at the end of the world. Remember, the joyful Feast of Tabernacles at the end of the religious year to celebrate the final harvest of the year. The firstfruits of the harvest were given to the high priest. Similarly, the 144,000 will be God's finest servants at the time of earth's harvest. This does not imply Jesus will love them more. Rather, like a proud father at graduation, He will beam to see 12,000 people from each tribe who have reached the same spiritual maturity that He had when on earth.

The great throng of the redeemed will not feel that Jesus is unfairly partial to the 144,000 firstfruits. In fact, those who will be alive during the Great Tribulation will recognize their indebtedness to one or more of the 144,000, through whom they heard or learned of the gospel. Everyone will rejoice that the terrible struggle is over. Everyone will cry for unspeakable joy. The reward Jesus will give each person far exceeds any suffering they endured for Christ's sake. John saw the 144,000 sing a *new* song that caused heaven's arches to ring with inexpressible happiness. The 144,000 will overcome sin through the same Spirit by which He overcame sin!

### **God's Global Messages**

The trumpets will awaken the people of earth to the sinfulness of their course. Into this bedlam, God will send 144,000 people especially endowed

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1 Luke 4:18

2 1 Corinthians 9:16

with the knowledge of God’s Law and the power of the Holy Spirit. They have messages from God. John saw these messages represented as angels flying midair above the earth. John wrote, “**Then I saw another angel [messenger<sup>1</sup>] flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘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.’**”<sup>2</sup> These verses give us important details about the messages.

1. John saw this angel messenger give the everlasting gospel to everyone who lives on the earth.
2. The everlasting gospel must be *loud* because every person on earth will hear it.
3. The message is that people must fear God because His judgment hour has come. This message will go throughout the earth when the trumpets begin and people become fearful. They are to fear Jesus, not Babylon.
4. The angel tells people to worship the Creator of heaven, earth, sea, and springs of water. This message is directly opposed to the laws of men mandating false worship to appease God.
5. The first four trumpets affect the earth, the sea, the springs of water, and the heavens—the exact entities mentioned in this message. The angel tells the people of earth to worship the Creator for He has brought about these events so all will know who Jesus really is. The call to worship God will be in direct opposition to the laws of Babylon which demands false worship.

Then John saw another message for earth. He wrote, “**A second angel followed and said, ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.’**”<sup>3</sup> The 144,000 will present the second message and tell the world that Babylon the Great has fallen. The term *fallen* does not mean broken or impotent. It means exposed as false. Satan will inspire the confederation between religion and politics,

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1 The Greek word for angel also means messenger.

2 Revelation 14:6–7

3 Revelation 14:8

and it will not appease God. In fact, Revelation 17 calls it “adultery” because spiritual matters belong to God and civil matters belong to governments. The second angel’s message will warn that even though Babylon’s influence is popular, imposing, and all-powerful, the foundation of the global church/state is false and exposed as the handiwork of Satan.

### **Application**

As you already know, the eternal gospel will go throughout the earth during the seven trumpets. People will be stirred and aroused to hear what the judgments are about. The 144,000 will present the eternal gospel so *loudly* that everyone, far and near will hear it. With trumpets in one ear and the everlasting gospel in the other, no one could miss the meaning of the moment.

Infused with Holy Spirit power, the 144,000 will share the first angel’s message that the great day of judgment has come, for Jesus is concluding His work in the heavenly sanctuary and mercy is about to end. Great multitudes will learn that the trumpets are designed to warn the world of Christ’s return. If they wish to receive salvation, they must now **worship** the Creator of heaven, earth, sea, and springs of water. The word worship means to submit or render obedience.

The irony of the matter is that people will hear they must worship the Creator at a time when Babylon is *saying almost the same thing*. Remember, clerics of all faiths in different lands will be saying that God has sent these judgments, and He must be appeased before they can stop. Babylon will legislate many ways to render obedience to God. The Muslims will look to the Koran for information on worship. The Jews will review the Talmud, the Mishna, and the Torah. Catholics will inquire of the pope for instruction on worship. But to what authority will Protestants appeal for information on worship? Tradition or the Bible?

### **A Great Mystery**

Jesus has very clearly expressed in the Bible how His subjects are to worship Him. This is not a matter left to human design. If humans can tell God how He is to be worshiped, then who has the greater authority? Babylon faces the problem that each religious system will enact laws to worship the same God in different ways. For example, Muslims regard Friday as a holy day, the Jews regard Saturday and Christians regard Sunday. Remember,

Revelation 13:8 says, “**All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast** [Babylon, which has seven heads and ten horns]—**all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.**” There is a *right way* and a *wrong way* to worship God.

Both Cain and Abel worshiped God. Abel worshiped God by bringing a lamb to the altar and sacrificing it according to God’s instruction. Cain, on the other hand, feigned worshiping God but did it on his own terms. He didn’t follow God’s instructions. Cain didn’t raise sheep, so he brought fruit from his garden. God was displeased with Cain and refused his worship, but He accepted Abel’s offering.<sup>1</sup> Cain became angry and murdered his brother. John warned, “**Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.**”<sup>2</sup> John wrote that Cain’s act of worship was evil. Indeed, it was blasphemous. Cain presumed God’s prerogative. He decided how he would worship God.

God will accept our worship if we worship Him in spirit and truth; that is, if we worship God according to all we know to be true. The eternal gospel that goes to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people contains information about worshiping the true God that will be new to most people. The first angel’s message of Revelation 14:7, loudly says to fear God and worship the Creator. The reason the first message begins in this manner is that most of the world does neither correctly. God knows about our darkness. This is why the light of the everlasting gospel will remove the darkness that Satan has placed around the subject of worship. Those who are honest in heart and worship God according to all the truth they have will rejoice to learn the full truth about worship.

### **Worship the Creator**

How are we to worship our Creator? Remember, the worship of God has not been left to human invention. Jesus, our creator, clearly explained in the Ten Commandments, how He is to be worshiped. Review the first four commandments found in Exodus 20:3–11:

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1 Genesis 4:1–16

2 1 John 3:12–13

1. “You shall have no other gods before [other than] me.
2. “You shall not make for yourself an image 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 parents 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.
3. “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”
4. “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

The first four commandments are the basis of true worship. They explain the reverence and respect due our creator, Jesus. We are not to worship any other god. We are not to create an idol and bow down before it. We are not to use the name of God in a careless way. We are to keep the seventh day holy as a memorial to our Creator and His creation.

The Ten Commandments are divided into two groups. The first four commandments deal with man’s relationship to God and the last six commandments deal with man’s relationship to his neighbor. The Ten Commandments define the two basic laws of life. Jesus said, “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets [the Scriptures] hang on these two commandments.**”<sup>1</sup>

Love is the basis of salvation. The two commandments Jesus spoke of in Matthew 22 are specified in the Ten Commandments. The meaning of love is not left to human definition. In fact, the word *love* today commonly

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1 Matthew 22:37–40

means sex, lust, or passion. What a perversion. Jesus came from heaven to correct human misunderstanding on this point. According to Jesus, true love produces obedience. **“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them”**<sup>1</sup> **“Anyone who loves me, will obey my teaching.”**<sup>2</sup> **“Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.”**<sup>3</sup>

Satan has obscured the importance of the first four commandments from most of the world. He has especially cloaked the fourth commandment, which contains divine instruction on worship, in darkness. Satan’s purpose for doing this is quite simple. If people forget their Creator, they will turn to other gods, for man needs a god of some kind. Man needs something to look up to—something to worship. Jesus created us with this need. If man forgets his Creator, he creates his own god(s).

Satan has had enormous success in displacing the Creator with manmade gods. The trumpets correct this. People all over the globe will be awakened to the knowledge of the true, living, and omnipotent God. The everlasting gospel will contain a clarion call to *worship the Creator* on His holy day.

The fourth commandment includes these important elements.

1. The seventh day of the week is holy because Jesus rested on the seventh day to commemorate the creation of the world. He made the seventh day uniquely different from the other six at creation.<sup>4</sup>
2. The seventh day alone is holy. The other six days are for our use and work.
3. Knowing that Satan would lead the world to forget the Sabbath, Jesus began the fourth commandment with the word, “Remember.”

### Was God’s Law Nailed to the Cross?

If you ask most Christians about the Ten Commandments, they will admit that nine of the ten are valid and important. It is against God’s Law to steal, kill, commit adultery, curse God, or worship idols. In fact, most of the Christian world is comfortable with nine of the Ten Commandments

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1 John 14:21

2 John 14:23

3 John 14:24

4 Genesis 2:2, 3

and readily acknowledge that they are the basis of morality. If you ask most Christians about the fourth commandment, you will suddenly learn they believe “the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross and are not binding.”

I believe that lawlessness abounds in America for this simple reason. For two hundred years, Protestant clerics have taught that God’s Ten Commandments are not binding. If we would reason from cause to effect, we would recognize the hopeless state in which our society finds itself is due to the practice of this very doctrine. Where there is no law, there is no order, safety, or harmony. The alternative is chaos, death, suffering, and evil of every sort.

Many Christians cannot reconcile the simultaneous harmony between law and grace, however, law and grace do exist and relate harmoniously. We need grace *because* there is law. If there were no law, grace wouldn’t be needed. In fact, if there is no law, there can be no sin!<sup>1</sup> Grace does not do away with the law either.<sup>2</sup> For example, if a judge grants a speeder grace so that he does not have to pay a speeding fine, this does not mean the speed limit is eliminated.

In practice, you can understand the harmony of law and grace if you are married. When two people are united in love, certain non-negotiable rules must be followed. Faithfulness is one such rule. It is the same with our Creator. If we love Him, we will abide by His non-negotiable rules, the Ten Commandments.

### **Relationships With God’s Law**

People have different perceptions of God’s Law and we can group them into a variety of categories depending on their relationships to His law.

- a. Those ignorant of the requirements of God’s Law. They have not had sufficient reason or opportunity to know God’s will.
- b. Those who are negligent or careless about God’s Law. They know about God’s Law, but prioritize earthly pursuits over religious interest and practice.
- c. Those who observe the law as a ritual necessary for salvation. They think they keep the law and feel justified by their assumed righteousness. They prioritize being technically correct.

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1 Romans 4:15; 1 John 3:4–6

2 Romans 3:31

- d. Those who believe there is no defined or implicit law. They don't believe the Ten Commandments are necessary or binding today and do not realize the consequences of what they believe. Many Christians may admit that people should obey nine of the Ten Commandments.
- e. Those who openly and defiantly rebel against God's Law. They don't want to know God and don't care what He says.
- f. Those seeking to know God and sincerely want to live in harmony with the principles of God's Law. They are willing to go, be, and do all that God asks.

This last group lives by faith. They realize that God's Law is based on two great principles: love to God and love to man. The first four commandments show our love to God and the last six reveal our love to man. They obey the commandments of Jesus *out of gratitude and love* for His salvation. They know that obedience does not merit or bring salvation.

There is a two-step process of harmonizing life with God's Law. First, we must realize that we cannot save ourselves through obedience to the law and our nature is inherently attracted to sin or lawlessness. This is why we need grace—for all have sinned. Second, those willing to live by faith recognize that Jesus alone can transform our sinful nature. We receive power to be overcomers when we open our minds and hearts to the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit. Sinners become saints through this miraculous process. Using an analogy, it means we must be born again every day.

### The Final Exam Is a Test of Faith

Jesus has carefully designed the final exam of earth. He will allow Satan and his forces to gain control of the world for a short time to see who has the faith to be obedient. Circumstances will be so desperate that it will be impossible to obey Jesus except by faith! Those who render obedience to Jesus will only be able to do so through faith in His promises. This is why John identified the remnant as follows, **“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.”**<sup>1</sup>

### The Third Message

If you still have doubts that John was talking about the Ten Commandments when he described the remnant, consider this message to the world.

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1 Revelation 12:17

John wrote, “A **third angel** [messenger] **followed them** [the first two angels] **and said in a loud voice: ‘If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.’ This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.**”<sup>1</sup>

These verses contain the most solemn threat Jesus has ever presented to the human race. The issue is worship. This warning message is for the world when Satan physically appears on earth and is specifically focused on the lamb-like beast.

1. If any man worships (submits to) the (lamb-like) beast that sets up the image, he will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the Lamb of God.
2. If anyone receives the mark or permit, or worships the image (the one-world confederation), he will receive God’s wrath full-strength.
3. Those refusing to worship Satan must be patient in their suffering. They are identified as obeying God’s commandments and remaining faithful to Jesus.

Only one of the Ten Commandments deals with worship in an external way. Satan knows this so he has led the world to worship on days other than the Lord’s day. According to the Bible, the Lord’s day is Saturday. Jesus said, “**The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.**”<sup>2</sup> Many Christians mistakenly think Sunday is the Lord’s day even though the Bible never says the first day of the week is the Lord’s day.

### **Reasons to Worship on Sunday?**

There is no scriptural support for worshipping on Sunday as Catholics and Protestants claim; neither is there support for worshipping on Friday as Islam claims. When Protestant America makes and enforces laws regarding Sunday sacredness to appease God, America will quickly go from national

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1 Revelation 14:9–12

2 Mark 2:28

apostasy to national ruin. During the trumpets, this nation will enact laws enforcing worship on Sunday, a day that defies God's Law. At this time, clerics will use certain scriptures to deceive people into thinking that worship on Sunday is scriptural.

Some refer to Paul's actions at Troas to claim that Sunday worship was practiced by the apostles. They maintain that Paul preached and believers ate from the Lord's Table (Lord's Supper) on the first day of the week.

If I were advocating for the sacredness of Sunday, I would not use this argument because it *always* backfires when *all* of the facts are considered. 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.”**<sup>1</sup> In Bible times, a day begins at evening and ends at evening.<sup>2</sup> The Jews also regarded a day from evening to evening and kept the Sabbath from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown.<sup>3</sup> The first day of the week began at sundown. The timing described in Acts 20:7 is that Paul stayed with the believers at Troas for seven days.<sup>4</sup> On the evening of the first day of the week, at supper time, the believers came together to eat supper with Paul and to say goodbye. The first day of the week in Paul's time began Saturday at sundown, or what we now call Saturday evening. 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 continued preaching until he was interrupted at midnight (about six hours). Then, he journeyed to Assos the following (Sunday) morning.

Consider these facts about this meeting:

1. Advocates for Sunday sacredness claim that the believers ate from the Lord's Table but Acts 20 does not say anything about eating at the Lord's Table or participating in the Lord's Supper. The text says they **“came together to break bread.”** *Breaking bread* does not necessarily mean eating from the Lord's Table. *Breaking bread* is a biblical expression for sharing or eating a meal.<sup>5</sup> Notice the following passage which describes the activities of the apostles and church members after the

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1 Acts 20:7

2 Genesis 1:5

3 Luke 23:50–56; Leviticus 23:32

4 Acts 20:6

5 Luke 24:35; Acts 27:35

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.”**<sup>1</sup>

2. An accident at midnight disrupted 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.<sup>2</sup>
3. Does eating from “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.<sup>3</sup> 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.
4. Acts 20:7 does not describe a regular church service. The Bible says Paul regularly worshiped on the seventh-day Sabbath.<sup>4</sup> The situation in Acts 20:7 was 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.
5. 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.<sup>5</sup> 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

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1 Acts 2:46–47

2 Acts 20:9–13

3 1 Corinthians 11:23–25

4 Acts 16:13; 17:2; 18:4

5 Acts 20:11

consider the first day of the week to be a holy day, decades after Christ's ascension.

Some Christians argue that Paul insisted offerings for the poor should be taken 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 the Lord'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 your 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."**<sup>1</sup>

In Paul's day, money was not a common medium of exchange as it is today. 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 so he could take cash to the persecuted believers in Jerusalem. Second, Paul did not want believers in Corinth to wait until he arrived and then rush to convert their possessions into cash. He knew it would be time-consuming and foolish because hurriedly exchanging goods for cash meant less cash. So, Paul wisely advised that believers start on Sunday of each week, which Paul regarded as a regular workday, 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.

Some Christians suggest that worship on Sunday is proper because Jesus arose from the dead on Sunday morning, the first day of the week. Yes, the resurrection is important, and the Bible does provide a celebration of the resurrection. It's called baptism. Notice what Paul says, **"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through**

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1 1 Corinthians 16:1-3

**baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”<sup>1</sup>**

Does baptism change or abrogate the fourth commandment? Not at all. In fact, only eight texts in the New Testament mentions the first day of the week and not one of them says that the sacredness of the seventh day was transferred to Sunday.

### **What Was Nailed to the Cross?**

Many Christians argue that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross. Yet, this doesn't solve the problem. Whatever happens to the fourth commandment, happens to the other nine. So, what was nailed to the cross? Only the ceremonies of the sanctuary services that were a shadow of the heavenly sanctuary were nailed to the cross. The key word here is *shadow*. Consider what Paul said to the believers in Colosse, **“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.”<sup>2</sup>** **“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.”<sup>3</sup>** **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. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you.”<sup>4</sup>**

Paul was talking about the regulations regarding *religious feasts, New Moon observances, and Sabbath days*. The Sabbath days that Paul wrote about are not found in the Ten Commandments. Rather, the term Sabbath days here applies to Sabbath *feast* days such as the Passover or Day of Atonement.<sup>5</sup> These feast days fell on different days of the week (like our birthday) because they occurred on the same date each year. When a feast day and the seventh day happened simultaneously, it was a special holy day. The death

1 Romans 6:1–4

2 Colossians 2:9–10

3 Colossians 2:13–14

4 Colossians 2:16–18

5 Leviticus 16:31; 23:26–32

of Jesus incidentally, occurred on such an occasion. The Passover in AD 30 occurred on the seventh-day Sabbath that year.<sup>1</sup>

The Jews confused God's Law with the laws of Moses much like we do today. Even though God wrote one set of laws with His finger and dictated the other set for Moses to write with his hand, the Jews never did understand the relationship between the laws. The lesser laws of Moses, containing the ceremonial rules, were kept in a pocket on the side of the ark, while the Ten Commandments were kept inside the ark.<sup>2</sup> After a permanent temple was erected in Jerusalem, the laws of Moses were not kept in the pocket on the ark and consequently, they were lost for a while.<sup>3</sup>

The Jews loved to argue about the laws. An expert lawyer even challenged Jesus with a test to see which law was the greatest.<sup>4</sup> The Jews misunderstood the purpose of the laws so their spirituality degenerated into a great legal system of darkness.<sup>5</sup>

When Paul explained the purposes behind the laws, and showed distinctions between them, the Jewish lawyers developed an intense hatred for him. When Paul claimed that ceremonial laws were meaningless, that was too much. He was captured and eventually died in prison for his convictions.<sup>6</sup> Paul was very explicit. The laws that were nailed to the cross were *shadows* of the real thing. The ceremonial laws requiring the sacrifice of lambs were no longer necessary because the Lamb of God had died, and the shadow was fulfilled. The ceremonial laws were temporary until their meaning was fulfilled. Paul had a serious dilemma. How could he get the Jews to cease doing something they had been doing for 1,800 years? We have the same dilemma. How do we get Christians to worship on Saturday when Sunday observance has been practiced for 1,800 years?

Paul was very clear in Hebrews 10 and Galatians 3 that the ceremonies never brought salvation in the first place; rather, they were temporary and were designed to teach us about salvation. The book of Hebrews was written about 33 years after Jesus returned to heaven and it states very clearly

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1 Mark 15:42–47; John 19:14

2 Deuteronomy 10:1–2; 31:26

3 2 Kings 23:2

4 Matthew 22:34–40

5 Matthew 23:2–15

6 Acts 21:27–36

that the seventh-day Sabbath of the Ten Commandments is to be observed. **“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.”**<sup>1</sup> In fact, all through his life, Paul faithfully observed the seventh-day Sabbath.<sup>2</sup>

### **Can’t Break One Commandment**

If we take the position that Jesus nailed the fourth commandment to the cross, then He must have nailed nine others there as well. Whatever we do with the fourth commandment, we must do with the other nine. John wrote the epistle 1 John about 70 years after Jesus ascended. He didn’t believe the Ten Commandments had been done away with. He wrote, **“We know that we have come to know him [Jesus] if we keep his commands. Whoever says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”**<sup>3</sup>

James wrote, **“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘You shall not murder.’ If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.”**<sup>4</sup>

James brings us to an important and fundamental conclusion regarding the royal law, God’s Ten Commandments. He says we must obey all the commandments. If we break one, we’re guilty of breaking them all because the King’s law is only fulfilled by love. We must first love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, and then our fellowman as ourselves.

Keeping the Sabbath will not save anyone. This is why the final test is carefully designed to test faith. Will you have the faith to obey God and keep His Sabbath holy?

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1 Hebrews 4:9–10

2 Acts 13:44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4, 11

3 1 John 2:3–6

4 James 2:8–11

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## Summary

Solomon clearly stated the issues of life. He said, **“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”**<sup>1</sup>

Those who love Jesus will obey Him and keep His commandments even though Satan arrays the whole world in opposition. The supreme test of love and faith for Jesus that will occur during the Great Tribulation will be if we follow His commandment to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. This test will expose those who love Jesus enough to live by faith. This test will separate the entire world into two camps: those worshiping the lamb-like beast and those worshiping the Lamb of God. Think about it. This test puts an entirely new meaning on the concept that eternal life comes by faith! Do you have enough faith in God to obey Him at any cost? Where will you stand?

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1 Ecclesiastes 12:13–14





# Four Global Announcements

Revelation predicts the coming manifestations of God's wrath and the response of earth's religious and political systems. It also reveals four profound announcements that God will send to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Ultimately, these four announcements will be more widely known than any other message on earth.

These four messages are dormant today because it is not the appointed time for their airing. However, Christians are proclaiming elements of all four messages around the world. The four messages, occurring in sequence, require a specific progression of global events to be effective. When the *universal* circumstances unfold, these four messages will penetrate every mind with the brilliance of sunlight. Even though we can understand them before the appointed time, they have not yet received the power that will accompany them.

There is nothing more powerful than a truth whose time has come. Like a runaway train, *timely* truth can penetrate any physical, mental, or spiritual blockade. Timing is everything. The greater the resistance to truth, the greater the exposure and power of *timely* truth. Just as an electrical circuit generates heat when there is more power than the circuit can bear, so these four messages will cause a great controversy among all peoples, nations, and languages.

The abbreviated form of the four global announcements is quite simple.

1. Obey God.
2. Disobey man's laws.
3. Disobey the Devil's demands.
4. Do not receive the mark of the beast.

The first commanding message will begin just after the censer in Revelation 8:2–5 is cast down. The global earthquake and the phenomena that follow serve as the starting gun for the world to announce the Great Tribulation and the judgment of the living. Think about the significance of the earthquake as it relates to commerce. Can you imagine the consequences of thousands of collapsed bridges and freeway overpasses in the US? I believe there is a short interval between the global earthquake and the sounding of the first trumpet. After the global earthquake, the 144,000 will announce the first of the four messages, but only a few will take notice. However, once the first trumpet event takes place, the world will recognize that the 144,000's prediction has come true. The fulfillment of prophecy will not change the remaining declarations of the 144,000; rather, their statements will receive much greater attention because of the first trumpet. So, more people will respond to the gospel call.

You may not understand the scope of the four global announcements, because they contain an obvious and a hidden meaning that will come into focus as the Great Tribulation events unfold. The angels will give four messages, and each message will oppose the global reaction to events occurring at that time. For example, the first message (in abbreviated form) is "Obey God." While every born-again Christian already understands the importance of this message, most people aren't obeying God even though they think they are. In other words, recognize that these four messages have two dimensions. The first dimension is the revealing of God's will to all humanity. The second dimension is the revealing of the rebellion within man against God's will. Thus, each message ignites a higher level of opposition until the people of earth are completely separated—as sheep or goats.

### **Right to the Point**

God uses few words. Speech is such a temporal and momentary means of communication. For example, over the course of your lifetime, how many sermons have you heard and forgotten? God prefers us to understand Him through His actions because we can learn more about His nature and character through studying His behavior over millenniums of time. So, God has included everything the last generation needs to know about salvation in the Bible. God is going to speak to the people of the world through His servant-prophets, the 144,000. They will present four compelling messages from the Bible that all will hear. Everyone will hear the gospel invitation:

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*Receive Jesus Christ as Savior AND Lord so that you can be saved.* For you to receive Jesus as your Savior is to recognize that you cannot save yourself. Salvation is only possible through faith in Jesus. If we accept Jesus as our Lord and Master, we voluntarily recognize His authority and become subject to His commandments. During the Great Tribulation, men will enact many laws that will stand in direct opposition to God's laws and this will bring the properties of salvation into sharpest focus. The subject of salvation will become simple to comprehend. We will be unable to obey God without great love for Him and faith in His promises.

### **World Response to the Trumpets**

A person cannot correctly understand Revelation's story, especially the four messages of Revelation, without first understanding what the fourth seal and the seven trumpets are all about. The reason I believe this is that we must first comprehend the global holocaust of the first four trumpets to appreciate the panic and desperation that will galvanize the whole world into a confused but collective unit to appease an angry God. This collective unit of seven religious systems is named Babylon, and it will rapidly develop into a coalition with great power once the Great Tribulation begins.

I also believe the four angels holding back the four winds in Revelation 7:1–4 are the first four angels with the seven trumpets because the four angels holding back the four winds have power to *harm* the earth. Specifically, they have power to harm the land, sea, and trees. After Jesus selects and seals the 144,000, the four angels will *harm* those three things. The only verses in Revelation describing the harm to the land, sea, and trees are in Revelation 8:7–9. Here, the first two angels of the seven trumpets render the harm that God has ordained for them to inflict. God does not permit the Devil and his angels to harm the earth; rather, they can only hurt people who haven't received the seal of God.<sup>1</sup> If the Devil's angels could harm the land, plants, and trees, all humanity would die prematurely, thwarting God's plan to reach all people with the gospel. Thus, the fifth through the seventh trumpets are called curses or woes because they affect people directly.

So, the fourth seal and the seven trumpets are central to understanding Revelation's story. The fourth seal contains four literal judgments from God: sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts. These four judgments are also the

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1 Revelation 9:4

four winds Jesus will release after the 144,000 are ready to do their work. The angels with the seven trumpets initiate God's literal judgments. The coalition of the world's religious systems<sup>1</sup> is man's *response* to the first four trumpets. This sets the stage for God's four messages. Once we understand the setting properly, we can see why these four messages are as volatile as dynamite.

### Two Witnesses

To make the testimony of the 144,000 credible, Jesus will give them a clear grasp of God's Law along with Holy Spirit power. The Two Witnesses will transform the 144,000 servant-prophets into a formidable group even though they are few and far between. The 144,000 will be largely disconnected from each other by geography and communication, but they will be very similar in character. They will bear *the identical* four powerful messages during the probationary period of the Great Tribulation.

God's purpose for empowering the 144,000 is to enable them to proclaim and demonstrate God's love to a dying world. They will be a group that God chooses who will love to save others. They will be individuals who love God with all their hearts, minds, and souls and their neighbors as themselves. Jesus will give the gift of prophecy to the 144,000.<sup>2</sup> The Bible proclaims this gift of prophecy as the *testimony of Jesus*. In Revelation 1:9, we read, **"I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."** John was suffering on the island of Patmos because of the testimony of Jesus.

An angel explained the testimony of Jesus to John. **"At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus.'"**<sup>3</sup>

When we combine these two texts, we learn that John was on the isle of Patmos because of the spirit of prophecy! What is the spirit of prophecy? What is the spirit of St. Louis? What is the spirit of praise and thanksgiving? What is the spirit of the Olympics? Basically, the spirit of something

1 The rise of the dragon-like beast out of the sea, Revelation 13:1.

2 Revelation 7:3; 10:7; 12:17

3 Revelation 19:10

is an attitude about that something. *The spirit of prophecy is an attitude of esteem for prophecy.*

Prophecy is a gift that comes directly from Jesus. Ponder these two verses from Paul: **“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the spirit, especially prophecy.”**<sup>1</sup> **“Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers.”**<sup>2</sup> Paul made an interesting point that prophecy is for believers—not unbelievers. This is because believers (should) have an eager attitude or spirit for prophecy, a desire to know God’s will, plans, and purposes. The people of God should especially desire the gift of prophecy, for it is the most direct means of knowing Jesus’ plans and His will. The testimony of Jesus can come through Bible prophecy or through a prophet.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of the method of delivery—prophecies from the Bible or through a prophet—the testimony of Jesus remains in constant agreement. A true prophet will express a correct understanding of Bible prophecy.

However, God has not revealed everything about the times and dates set by God to His prophets.<sup>4</sup> Paul said of prophets, **“For we know in part and we prophesy in part.”**<sup>5</sup> When God showed scenes concerning the end of the world to Old or New Testament prophets, they all thought the end was imminent or near. However, their most recent suppositions about God’s chronology have been proven wrong by nearly two millenniums. Remember that God only unlocks His chronology when the time for fulfillment arrives. This means that the final generation can know they are the last generation because they alone are enabled to assemble all that the prophets were shown.<sup>6</sup> Many true prophets have been wrong about the timing of Christ’s appearing.<sup>7</sup> However, today we can determine a correct understanding of Bible prophecy that agrees with the content of the visions God gave to the true prophets.

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1 1 Corinthians 14:1

2 1 Corinthians 14:22

3 Jesus calls the book of Revelation His testimony—Revelation 22:16.

4 Acts 1:7

5 1 Corinthians 13:9

6 Daniel 12:9

7 1 Corinthians 7:29; 1 John 2:18; Hebrews 1:1; 9:26; 10:37; John 21:22–23; 1 Peter 1:20; 4:7; Romans 13:11–12

Here is how the mechanics of the gift of prophecy works. First, Jesus says something in heaven. The Holy Spirit hears what Jesus says. Then, the Holy Spirit carries the information to the prophet(s). Read the following verse to learn how this process unfolds: **“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the 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.”**<sup>1</sup> The gift of prophecy is the vehicle through which the testimony of Jesus comes. The 144,000 will be servant-prophets who receive the word of the Lord, a testimony from Jesus via the Holy Spirit.

This matter comes into focus when we read Revelation 12:17: **“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.”** The last generation of God’s people will be those who obey God’s commandments (remember the angel’s first message) and hold to the testimony of Jesus as communicated via the Holy Spirit to the 144,000. Incidentally, the Devil in verse 17 goes off to make war against the remnant. The war is described in Revelation 13:7. **“It [Babylon, the dragon-like beast] was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.”** During this coming war, Jesus will draw close to the saints and He will greatly encourage them!

### **Doctrine is Important**

Within the context of the four messages that the 144,000 will proclaim, five doctrinal truths will be revealed.

1. The salvation of God
2. The worship of God
3. The sanctuary of God
4. The return of God
5. The condition of man in life and death

These five doctrines converge and bring Revelation’s story into clearest focus. For example, if you do not understand the worship of God, how can you understand the first message found in Revelation 14:7 which says, “Worship God?” If you do not understand the sanctuary of

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1 John 16:13

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God, how can you understand the meaning of the throwing down of the censer in Revelation 8:2–5? If you do not understand the condition of man in death, how can you understand the purpose and importance of two resurrections? If you do not understand that the saints are going to experience the Great Tribulation and face martyrdom, how can you be prepared? I am not suggesting that every person on earth is going to receive the equivalent of a college education in these doctrines. Instead, I am saying that every person on earth who wants to be saved will receive a *saving knowledge* of these five doctrines. The difference between a saving knowledge and years of study will be irrelevant. What will be relevant is knowledge sufficient for faith and endurance to stand firm for God and His truth!

### **Apocalyptic Prophecy—A Calendar of Events**

There is an important difference between apocalyptic prophecy and doctrinal truths, and many people do not understand the distinction. Perhaps the easiest way to explain the difference is to think of apocalyptic prophecy as a calendar of events. Each element within a prophecy belongs to a specific moment in time. For example, the first trumpet in Revelation 8 happens at a specific moment in time. In fact, the Bible says that the sixth trumpet happens at a specific hour, day, month, and year.<sup>1</sup> So, every apocalyptic element has a date connected with it. Thus, apocalyptic prophecy is essentially a calendar of predicted events.

On the other hand, doctrinal truth is knowledge from God about His love and interest in man. Doctrine reveals God's interest and ideals for man, and within these ideals, we find God's purpose for man and our power of choice to determine our destiny. I am personally convinced of something that seems strange to most people. I believe many would knowingly and freely choose to forfeit heaven if they could see the conditions and type of life that all in heaven will live. Can you imagine a person living in heaven for eternity and not being able to get something he wanted? Suppose someone wanted to get a promotion or a better-paying job, and God said, "No." How long could they live with this desire and God's refusal and remain happy? I chose this illustration because a sinner in heaven would have the same issues that resulted in Lucifer's fall long ago.

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1 Revelation 9:15

Most people don't study the Scriptures to better understand doctrine. Rather, most of us become satisfied with a few simplistic ideas and that's the end of searching the Bible for more truth. Bible studies are often discussions revealing the poverty of our knowledge rather than serious investigation into the infinite realm of God's Word. It's a lot like our high school education. Can you still solve an algebra problem or have your math skills decayed to the point that basic arithmetic is a challenge?

Apocalyptic prophecy and doctrine are twin pillars. Apocalyptic prophecy has to do with *when*—His timing of events. Doctrine has to do with *why*—His reasons for events. When we combine these pillars, we discover God's amazing plan He set in motion before He created the world. Now that we have reviewed the foundation for the messages, let's examine each soon-coming message.

### The First Message

**“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘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.’”<sup>1</sup>**

John saw the angels flying in midair which represents their work to deliver each message to earth's inhabitants since the angels will not directly deliver the four messages. The 144,000 servant-prophets will bear that responsibility. The Greek word for angel is *aggelos* which simply means messenger. Notice how Jesus used the word *aggelos* in this text: **“Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: ‘I will send my messenger [*aggelos*] ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”<sup>2</sup>** In this case, the word *aggelos* in verse 10 applied to John the Baptist—a herald of the first advent, and in Revelation 14:6, the *aggelos* represents the 144,000—heralds of the second advent.

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1 Revelation 14:6–7

2 Matthew 11:9–12

The first message the 144,000 will proclaim to every person living on earth includes three specific elements.

1. Fear God.
2. Give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come.
3. Worship the Creator who made the heavens, earth, sea, and springs of waters.

Let's consider each element within the first message, "Fear God." The Greek word for fear is *phobeo* which means to cause fear or terrify. The English word phobia is a derivative of the Greek word. This command means exactly what it says. God is above any power or authority. He can speak worlds into, or out of, existence. He requires His subjects to hold reverent respect for His authority and His throne. No ruler, in heaven or on earth, can tolerate insolent subjects and maintain the dignity of His throne. Peter puts some perspective on this saying, "**For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.**"<sup>1</sup> "**This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings.**"<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the work of the 144,000 on behalf of the world begins after the global earthquake. They begin with a call to fear God as the Supreme Ruler, who has the authority of life and death over all the inhabitants of earth. This message flies in the face of the world's attitude about God. They will scoff like Pharaoh, "Who is *your* God that we should be so concerned?"

The second element within the first message contains more detail. It says, "**Give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.**" We define the Greek sense of giving glory today by giving high honor or exalted recognition. We give great glory to Olympic athletes when we stand them on a podium and place a metal around their necks that recognizes their

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1 2 Peter 2:4–6

2 2 Peter 2:10

accomplishments. This glory is not imaginary. Often, it is converted into millions of dollars for product endorsements.

In God's case, we give God glory by recognizing that all His works and commands are faithful and true. We give God glory by exalting His laws and commands above anything else. We give God glory by putting Him first, above anything else. Indeed, this is the point of the first message because the hour of His judgment of earth has begun. When the 144,000 present this message on earth, God begins judging the living and sealing everyone in their decision for life eternal or death eternal.

God does not determine the fate of each person during the judgment of the living as He did on the dead. Rather, when he judges the living, He seals people in their decision for faith or rebellion. He sends the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people with great convincing power to separate those who will receive His truth and live by faith from those who will refuse His invitation and rebel against Him. Here's the mechanics of the process.

1. Everyone on earth will hear the full gospel invitation.
2. As they hear, they will have to decide for or against the message. There will be no middle ground because desperate circumstances will require each person to accept the gospel as delivered by the 144,000 or reject it. When survival itself is at stake, decisions aren't too complicated—they may be hard to make, but the issues are clear.
3. Once a decision is made, God will test each person to confirm if he is solid in his decision. If he isn't, the testing becomes more intense until he reaches a solid decision.
4. After the test reveals the final decision, that person is sealed in his decision of faith or rebellion. The sealing is final.

So, this element of the first message, *the hour of His judgment has come*, clearly reveals the test day has arrived—the Great Tribulation has begun.

The last element within the first message logically follows the first two elements.

1. Fear God. Have due respect for His authority.
2. Give Him glory because the hour of His judgment has come. Understand that His terrible judgments are the only means left to awaken the world to its sinful course. He must take drastic actions so that every person,

regardless of religious background, might hear His truth and understand that He is now sealing each person's decision for eternity.

3. Worship the Creator who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and springs of waters. This third command is a call to worship God. Strange as this might seem, God can only be worshiped on His terms. If we can determine the time or manner that we worship God, we would have greater authority than God. So, the call to worship God involves time and manner. The time is His holy Sabbath day, Saturday, the seventh day of the week.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the Bible also reveals that God can only be worshiped in spirit and truth.<sup>2</sup> God will not make anyone worship Him on His holy day. However, those who love and honor Him will choose to obey His commands.<sup>3</sup> The 144,000 will call the inhabitants of earth to worship God on Saturday, according to His fourth commandment. They will call the inhabitants of earth to worship God in a spirit of humility and in the joy of truth on His holy day.

Remember, the four global announcements have two dimensions. The first is the revelation of God's will. The second dimension is the revelation of man's rebellion. When the first message goes forth, men will scoff at God's commandment to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, but the story becomes more interesting. The first message call to worship the Creator who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water is not a rhetorical phrase. Compare how these features will be affected by the first four trumpets.

- Trumpet 1 – Earth, trees, and grass burned up
- Trumpet 2 – Sea creatures die, ships sink
- Trumpet 3 – Springs of water contaminated
- Trumpet 4 – Heavens turned dark

There is a direct connection between the first four trumpets and the first message. Compare the devastation of the four trumpets with the first message. The 144,000 will proclaim the first message when an angel at the heavenly altar hurls the censer filled with fire to the earth.<sup>4</sup> When the

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1 Exodus 20:8–11

2 John 4:23

3 John 14:15

4 Revelation 8:5

trumpets begin, people will suddenly get very religious. A strange aspect of fear is that it often drives religiosity.

I believe the first four trumpets will occur in rather quick succession in a period of about 60 days. Regardless of the time frame, the devastation of the first trumpet will be powerfully convincing because the first trumpet will set many millions of acres on fire from flaming meteors. Then, ka-boom! A great asteroid will hit the sea, and the tidal wave does horrific damage to seaports all around that ocean. Then, ka-boom! Another great asteroid will hit a continent, and the resulting ground waves will sheer water wells and septic systems. This will contaminate the water, and millions will die from the plague of typhus or typhoid. Then, a deep rumble will occur within the belly of the earth and volcanos will belch tons of ejecta into the atmosphere. Entire islands will disappear and darkness from the volcanic clouds will settle on portions of the world.

The people of earth will be stopped in their tracks. Truly, this will be a time when they stand still and experience the wrath of almighty God. The first four trumpets will be so overwhelming, so extensive, so horrific, and so powerful that everyone will tremble before God's wrath. Just as Mount Sinai shook when Jesus descended on it to speak His Ten Commandments, the whole world will tremble the day Jesus begins His judgment of the living. His manifestations will continue until He has opened every mind and ear to hear what He has to say.

Religious leaders will quickly conclude that God's trumpet judgments have come on the world because the people of earth (not just one nation) have offended Him. Christians will use texts like Daniel 9:13–14. Muslims, Jews, Eastern Mystics, and the heathen will reach the same conclusion by turning to their spiritual authorities. Almost spontaneously, religious leaders will call for a global conference to address God's wrath. They will say things like, "Our global union of humanity to appease a universal God is diverse. Let us each do our part to put away sin so that God will not destroy us." The end result of the conference will be a new world organization, which is the dragon-like beast in Revelation 13:1–8.

As a result of the trumpet destructions, governments will implement martial law and contingency constitutions all over the world. They will use rationing as the common means to control the supply and distribution of necessities for life. Thus, they will curtail the right to buy and sell. Later, the

Devil's forces will restrict and control even more. The world will receive a mortal blow, and humanity will change course attempting to survive.

Interestingly, when the 144,000 proclaim, "Worship the Creator," people will scoff. With the destruction caused by the seven trumpets, every person's heart will be fearful. As religious leaders call for laws compelling respect for God, politicians will be powerless to stop the surge of popular demand. And, given the circumstances, who can argue with the movement? Governments will install martial law in heavily damaged areas. A national movement will begin in America to enact and enforce Sunday laws trying to placate an angry God. Sunday, religious leaders will say, is the Lord's day and it should be given due respect. It's a day for family and *reverence for God has been an important family value that has been lost during this century*. The government will require commercial businesses to close on Sunday for reasons consistent with the times. Sunday compliance, at first, will be imposed in America for business and family reasons. Later, as circumstances worsen, it will be declared as God's day of rest. For example, Friday will be similarly enforced in Muslim countries and Israel will have Saturday laws.

Understand that God approves of man's laws that cooperate with His laws.<sup>1</sup> However, when man's laws run contrary to God's laws, God is not pleased, and eventually, He destroys those laws and lawmakers.<sup>2</sup> The relationship that will exist between religious leaders and civil authorities will become unholy the moment civil authorities enact a law respecting the sacredness of Sunday, for Sunday has never been the Sabbath of God. In fact, the fourth commandment says that the seventh day is God's holy day. God's Law clearly mandates worship on the seventh day of the week, but the religious coalition that will be formed by leaders all over the world will pressure civil authorities to mandate that God be worshiped on the prevailing day of worship in that nation. What makes this action so vile is this: What body of men can tell God when He is to be worshiped? Even more, what body of men have the authority to tell others *when* they must worship the God of heaven? Such an act is a violation of the first human right—the right to freedom of conscience in the worship of God.

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1 Romans 13:1

2 Daniel 4:25

Then, a second message joins the first. Understand that the four messages join sequentially and enhance the gospel call, so when combined, everyone will hear the messages.

### The Second Message

In response to man's actions, God will send a second message throughout the earth. It says, **"A second angel followed and said, 'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.'"**<sup>1</sup>

We often limit the definition of the word fallen to mean a fall from power or a fall from a high place. However, the word fallen goes further. It also means to be found corrupt or deceptive. For example, we can say that a religious leader has fallen. In reality, they may have fallen in multiple ways: as a leader of an enterprising ministry, from high visibility on a video ministry, or from respect because of sexual deviancies, dishonesty, or deception. Once these leaders fail, we can then say it is evident that *now* they are fallen.

What initiates the second message of the 144,000 that Babylon is fallen? The answer is found in the verse, **"which made all the nations drink."** When religious and political leaders of the world cross the line and *knowingly* enforce laws compelling false worship, they fall from God's grace and are exposed as false religion. God has permitted seven global religious systems: Atheism, Heathenism, Judaism, Islam, Eastern Mysticism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. These are the seven heads of Babylon found in Revelation 13. During the Great Tribulation, God will reveal to every person on earth that these religious systems are false. They are false because they claim to speak for Him, but none do. Even though they claim to have the truth about Him, none do. And even though they claim to have the solution to appeasing God and stopping His judgments, none do.

After the global earthquake which comes just before the first trumpet, the 144,000 will proclaim with great power that the hour of God's judgment has begun. They also will call everyone to truly worship Jesus the creator and honor His holy Sabbath day, but few will listen. Then, the trumpets sound, and the religious systems of the world will influence politicians to make laws that *require* worshipping God. The last resort of all false religions

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1 Revelation 14:8

is the use of force. This is what the Bible means when it says, “[Babylon] **made all nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.**” The people of all nations will be forced to obey Babylon. So, the religious systems that constitute Babylon will be exposed as fallen, or false.

The situation almost becomes comical, as no religion or nation can agree on a method to appease God. Catholics and Protestants will require Sunday worship while Muslims and Jews will require Friday worship and Saturday worship, respectively. There is *one* angry God. There is *one* devastated world. There are *seven* religions claiming to have the truth about *one* God that needs to be appeased. There can be no unanimity on the day of worship. In fact, this very dilemma is how the first beast of Revelation 13, Babylon, derives its name.

God will send a second message to the world at just the right moment. As the world coalition of religious powers come to authority to appease God, He says through His servants, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen.” The religious systems of the world will be exposed as false. They do not know God’s truth. Of course, God desires for people to choose His truth.

### **The Third Message**

The third message is directly connected to the sounding of the fifth trumpet, which is the physical appearing of the Devil. Understand that nothing has ever happened on earth (except Mount Sinai) that can be compared to the Devil’s physical presence. Certainly, no one living today has ever seen such a display of power, glory, and beauty when the Devil and his angels appear on earth.

The Devil, once he is here in the flesh, will attempt to take the world captive through deception. He will display all sorts of miracles and perform astonishing signs to convince people that he is almighty God. He will say he is here to usher in a new age, that as God, he will rule the earth. Millions will receive him as God. Muslims will believe that he is Allah. Jews will believe that he is the promised Messiah. Catholics and Protestants will believe he is the long-awaited Jesus Christ. Atheists will have to admit that he is a superior being. Heathens will acknowledge him as the Great Spirit of the ages and many Eastern Mystics will receive this being as the God of the New Age. In his cleverly designed deception, he will satisfy millions of diverse people with his claims of being God.

Revelation identifies the physical appearing of the Devil as a beast that will appear to be “lamb-like” or Christ-like, yet he will speak like the “dragon.”<sup>1</sup> However, the Devil’s speech will reveal his true identity because, after a pleasant season of gathering followers, he will begin to place very heavy demands upon his subjects. **“It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads.”**<sup>2</sup>

The work of the Devil will consist of a deceptive phase, then a controlling phase, and finally, a destructive phase. So, the first thing he does is gather billions of believers through deception. Then, he motivates them to take control of the world to establish his new kingdom. This war to take control of the world is the sixth trumpet. When the Devil gains control of the world, he will order his followers to destroy God’s people, especially the 144,000 as thoroughly and quickly as possible. **“The second beast [the Devil] was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.”**<sup>3</sup>

The third angel gives a message pertinent to its time. **“A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: ‘If anyone worships the [lamb-like] beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.’”**<sup>4</sup>

The second and third messages contain important symbolism about the drinking of wine. To drink wine that is maddening (second message) or to drink the wine of God’s fury (third message) refers to internalizing some event or digesting some experience. For example, Jesus said to His disciples, **“You don’t know what you are asking,’ Jesus said to them. ‘Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?’**

**“‘We can,’ they answered.**

**“Jesus said to them, ‘You will indeed drink from my cup.’”**<sup>5</sup>

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1 Revelation 13:11

2 Revelation 13:16

3 Revelation 13:15

4 Revelation 14:9–10

5 Matthew 20:22–23

So the third message is a direct warning against obeying and worshipping the Devil. This message will really bring controversy because many people will believe the Devil is God. The 144,000 will be claiming that he is the Devil. What will be the feelings of those on the Devil's side, toward the 144,000 and their followers?

The world will be caught in an acute dilemma. Worship the Devil and receive God's promised wrath, or worship God and receive Satan's immediate wrath. In this furnace of persecution, *only those who have strong faith* in God will be able to stand firm for truth's sake. James describes the process that proves that salvation comes by faith. **"But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds."**<sup>1</sup> **"You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone."**<sup>2</sup>

### The Fourth Message

The 144,000 proclaim one final message that God will give from His heart. Only God will comprehend the importance of this plea since no human has ever seen anything comparable to the seven last plagues. In some respects, the seven trumpets are samples. However, the fourth message will occur just before the seventh trumpet sounds. The seventh trumpet will mark the end of God's mercy and the beginning of the final woe, the seven *last* plagues. John wrote of the seven last plagues, **"I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed."**<sup>3</sup>

The fourth and final message to the world is this. **"After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: 'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal. 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.'**

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1 James 2:18

2 James 2:24

3 Revelation 15:1

**“Then I heard another voice from heaven say: ‘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. Pour her a double portion from her own cup. Give her as much torment and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, ‘I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn.’ Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.”<sup>1</sup>**

The message is self-explanatory. However, John used four instances of Old Testament language in these verses to help make this message more encompassing and understandable. So, read the following references from your Bible and compare the fourth message with them. You will find this interesting. To help you get started, I’ve included a few remarks.

Jeremiah 5:26–27 talks about cages full of birds. So, what does Revelation 18:2 mean saying that Babylon is a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird? Jeremiah explains how wicked men are like those who set traps to snare birds. The trap works well because birds don’t understand the trap or their fate. In a similar way, this message is designed to unmask the fact that religious and political leaders of the world are leading people into a great trap where they will receive God’s wrath without mercy. The tragedy is that millions refuse to admit the coming consequences for their actions.

Jeremiah 25:15–17 speaks of God sending Jeremiah through the land and making all nations drink of God’s cup of wrath. The point is that God is sovereign and He makes the nations drink of His cup of wrath if they drink the maddening wine of Babylon. See also Psalm 60:3.

Jeremiah 50:8–41 speaks of a parallel to flee ancient Babylon. Read the entire selection to learn why God calls His people to come out of Babylon.

Lamentations 1:1–3 speaks of Israel’s former greatness. How like a queen, she ruled over the land, and then after God’s wrath came over her, she became helpless, like a widow. Compare this scenario with Babylon’s great power until the time of the seven last plagues.

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1 Revelation 18:1–8

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## Summary

The purpose of the four messages is to gather all the saints into one fold. Jesus will freely offer salvation to any and all who will receive their Savior as Lord—no matter how bad or terrible the past life. These four messages will expose the rebellion of sin that contaminates the hearts of men and women. They reveal God’s love to save to the utmost and show our Creator’s will.

Timing is everything. The 144,000 will bear these messages, and every nation, kindred, tongue, and people will hear them within a short period of about 1,260 days. These four messages occur at specific moments in the progression of end-time events and will result in a great harvest of souls at the second coming. John says, **“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 before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”**<sup>1</sup> **“Then one of the elders asked me, ‘These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?’**

**“I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’**

**“And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’”**<sup>2</sup>

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1 Revelation 7:9

2 Revelation 7:13–14





# The Close of Probation

We have studied the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11. I believe the Two Witnesses are God's Law and the Holy Spirit. These two powers work together to save man. God's two laws of love govern the entire universe. The Holy Spirit is God's power exemplified through His chosen people. Together, they testify of salvation and its requirements. Everyone on earth will hear the message from the 144,000 before the end comes. The clarion message of salvation will cause great controversy on earth. The preaching of the gospel truth will cause great anger and resistance from those who love evil, for those who love evil hate the light.<sup>1</sup>

The four messages will reach every person on earth during the short period of the trumpets. The powerful struggle against the gospel will only give the gospel greater attention. Like a great forest fire, the gospel will first spread through populated cities and then to distant places of the world. Persecution will force people to flee for safety; and as they flee, they will carry the gospel with them. This is how the gospel will go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. The 144,000 will expose Babylon's doctrine as lies and in return, Babylon will seek to destroy them and their followers.

There is a historical parallel to this scenario. After Jesus ascended to heaven, the apostles preached the gospel of Jesus and the promise of His return with great power and they baptized 3,000 at Pentecost. The religious leaders and civil authorities could not tolerate such interest in the truth. So, they kindled the fires of persecution and as the saints scattered to the four corners of earth, they carried the gospel with them.

Jesus warned His disciples, **“There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great**

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1 John 3:20

signs from heaven. But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life.”<sup>1</sup> These verses outline two important points.

1. Jesus has promised to give His followers the words to say when they are challenged for their faith!
2. Even though the world will hate you, Jesus says, **“Stand firm, and you will win life.”**

Jesus has promised to be with each one of His children during this time of trial. He said, **“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**<sup>2</sup>

### **The Spirit of Prophecy**

We have learned that the remnant will keep God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> We know what the commandments are, but what is the testimony of Jesus?

Toward the end of John’s vision, he felt such a deep sense of gratitude to his attending angel that he bowed at his feet to worship him. But the angel said, **“Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus.”**<sup>4</sup>

The angel said the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. This means that the remnant have prophetic understanding through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They will understand what God is going to do and why. The remnant will anticipate the fulfillment of each event and be prepared for it. **“Many [of the remnant] will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the**

1 Luke 21:11–19

2 Matthew 28:20

3 Revelation 12:17; 14:12

4 Revelation 19:10

**wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.”<sup>1</sup>**

The remnant will not be caught by surprise, because they have carefully studied the Bible and prayed for enlightenment. Perhaps one of the clearest evidences of this point is found in Revelation 17:8. **“The beast, which you saw . . . will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast.”** In other words, John wrote the world will be astonished when Satan appears, while those who studied the prophecies will be prepared.

### **The Disciples, Apostles, and Gentiles**

The apostles were a select group of men. Jesus had given them a special opportunity to learn about Him and the kingdom of heaven that others did not have. For three and a half years, they walked with Jesus and learned from Him. He was preparing them for the great work they needed to do after He returned to the Father.

After Jesus ascended, the apostles received Holy Spirit power. It was quite an experience. It happened at the Feast of Pentecost which was 50 days after the Passover. According to ceremonial law, Jews were required to attend, so Jews from all over Asia were in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit created a great noise—a sound like a violent wind came from heaven and what appeared to be tongues or flames of fire appeared on the heads of the apostles.

This interruption of the Pentecost service gained immediate attention, for those who had received the flames of fire began to speak in the native languages of the visiting Jews. The author of Acts wrote, “Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: ‘Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Ar-

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1 Daniel 12:10

abs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit used three elements which enabled the gospel to rapidly spread outside of Jerusalem.

- The gospel instantly transcended the language barrier, as everybody heard the gospel in their tongue!
- The number of Jews receiving Jesus Christ and His gospel increased thirtyfold that day.
- Those accepting the gospel carried their newfound faith to distant lands where the apostles would never be able to go.

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus began with only 12 disciples. When the Holy Spirit was given to Jesus’ apostles at the Pentecost ceremony, He reached 3,000 more Jewish people. These new converts went home and told even more Jewish people about Jesus. About three and a half years later, Jesus sent the disciples to the Gentiles to gather an even larger harvest of believers. Remember AD 34—the commission of Peter and Saul’s conversion? This is how the gospel went throughout the world in ancient times and this is a sample of how the gospel will go throughout the world in our day.

In Revelation, we have a process almost identical to Pentecost. First, Jesus will select and seal 144,000 people as *spark plugs*. These people know the testimony of the Bible. They have studied themselves full, thought themselves straight, prayed for the Holy Spirit, and are ready to walk by faith. Jesus will then give them the power of the Holy Spirit’s *latter rain*.

The term *latter rain* refers to the second, larger rainfall that occurred in Palestine during the spring of each year, just before harvest time. The first rain, known as the *early rain*, took place in the autumn and marked the beginning of the planting season. Rains continued throughout the winter, but the latter rain in the spring was crucial for maturing the crops just before harvest. These crops were then harvested and presented before the Lord at the Feast of Pentecost. The analogy is that both the early and latter rains are necessary to bring the crop to maturity.<sup>2</sup>

God is now unfolding Revelation’s mysterious story because the time of fulfillment has come. Jesus is selecting and preparing those who will

1 Acts 2:5–11

2 Deuteronomy 11:14; Jeremiah 3:3; Joel 2:23; Hosea 6:3

constitute the 144,000 from among those who will walk by faith. These, in turn, will explain to the world Jesus' actions when He opens the fourth seal.

As people hear the gospel message, many will immediately see its harmony and through faith, accept its truthfulness. Some will join the Revelation movement and become part of the first remnant. In effect, the first remnant will be a support group for the 144,000. When the trumpets begin to sound, the combined army of the 144,000 and the first remnant are prepared for their work. They fearlessly march into Babylon to gather the rest of God's people who haven't heard the everlasting gospel. Jesus calls to those in Babylon, **"Come out of her [Babylon], 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."**<sup>1</sup>

### **The Close of Mercy**

Jesus does not sneak up on people and close the door of mercy without warning. On the other hand, the Devil delights to snuff out life and thus abruptly end their opportunity to receive salvation. The apostle Paul understood this quite clearly. He said, **"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."**<sup>2</sup> Jesus is tenderly calling. He is about to conclude His work in the heavenly sanctuary. Are you ready to live by faith? Are you obedient to His call?

Remember, the closing of mercy during the time period of the trumpets consists of the following steps.

1. Each person on earth must hear the everlasting gospel.
2. Each person will be required to make a decision about the gospel.
3. Each person is tested on his decision.
4. Each person is sealed in his decision.

Mercy closes for an individual when the four steps are complete. Since people in different lands will hear the warning message of Revelation at different times during the trumpets, some will be sealed before others. When all have heard the final invitation, made their decision, and are sealed in their decision, probation is ended. The Ancient of Days then dismisses the court.

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1 Revelation 18:4-5

2 Hebrews 4:7

### The Proclamation

From our study about the trumpets, we learned that corporate probation ends when the censer at the heavenly altar is thrown down. The sins of earth have reached the point of no return. The judgment review of the books in heaven has been completed. It is time to judge the living—each person will now be judged. The trumpet time period is the *hour of God's judgment*. It is the time of judgment for the living and the seventh trumpet marks the end of the judgment process. John described the close of mercy in Revelation 14:14–20: **“I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, ‘Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.’ So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.**

**“Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, ‘Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.’ The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia [180 miles].”**

So, we can conclude from these verses that there are two gatherings.

Jesus, the Son of Man, is seated on the white cloud and is told by an angel coming from the temple that the time for harvest has come. The action of swinging the sickle over the earth symbolizes the gathering of God’s children into safety. Everyone has made his decision, so the harvest *is ripe*, and mercy is ended.

Later, another angel comes from the temple with a sharp sickle and is told to gather the wicked and put them into the winepress of God’s wrath. This action symbolizes the gathering or bundling of the wicked to receive the wrath of God—the seven last plagues. John commented that the number of wicked people (grapes) thrown into the winepress of God’s wrath is enormous!

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Compare Revelation 14:14–20 with Matthew 13:24–43. In Matthew 13, Jesus told a parable of the man who sowed good seed in his field, but the man’s enemy sowed weeds to ruin his crop. The man’s servants asked if they should pull up the weeds, but the owner said, **“No, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”**<sup>1</sup>

At first glance, the parable in Matthew seems the opposite of John’s account from Revelation because the wicked are first bundled together and then the wheat is gathered into the barn. The answer to this conundrum is that the good and the bad grow together until the *time* of harvest. The wicked, which make up Babylon’s confederation, will be gathered or bundled first at the harvest. The world’s coalition or global union will be destroyed (“burned”) at the harvest before the wheat is gathered into the *barn* at the close of probation.

The Father will hold the door of mercy open as long as there is one person who has not heard the invitation. Remember, Jesus came to save to the utmost. This is the mystery of God. No one will perish without first having an opportunity to be saved. The gospel offers salvation full and free to those willing to live by faith. It is because everyone has made his decision that Jesus is told to swing His sickle over the earth. The harvest is ripe and ready for the picking. The wheat has been gathered and the door of mercy is closed.

Then an angel gathers the wicked who received the mark of the beast. They have refused the gospel invitation. Even worse, they have allied themselves with Satan to destroy God’s people and this makes God angry. Therefore, He visits them in wrath without mercy to avenge the cruel suffering they have inflicted on His innocent children.

We can also conclude from Revelation 14:14–20 that Jesus does not know when probation is to close.

Jesus is told *when* to close probation by the angel coming from the heavenly temple. Jesus will not make the decision to close probation. The Father decides when enough is enough! Jesus said: **“But about that day or**

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1 Matthew 13:29–30

**hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.”<sup>1</sup>**

Only the Father knows when mercy will end. Some Bible students believe this verse applies to the second coming, but a close investigation shows this is not possible. The key to understanding these verses is found in a comparison with Noah’s experience. Jesus said that in the days before the flood, people were eating, drinking, and marrying. Nothing is inherently wrong with any of these things if we put God first in our lives. Noah preached of the coming flood for 120 years and the people of earth were well aware of Noah and his message. They also saw the giant boat. What they didn’t know about was when mercy would end. The day Noah entered the ark, the door was closed. The closing of the ark’s door sealed eight people inside and a world outside. The closing of the door of mercy in heaven is the issue—this is the moment in time that matters most.

Matthew pointed out that men and women can work side by side, yet when the door of mercy closes in heaven, one will be found safe inside and the other locked outside forever. The most serious moment in all of Revelation is found in Revelation 14:14–16. This, as far as salvation is concerned, is the end. When Jesus comes in the clouds of glory, *He brings His reward with Him* for the eternal reward of each person has already been decided!<sup>2</sup>

### **The Seventh Trumpet Reviewed**

It might be helpful to refresh our minds about the seventh trumpet to ensure all the elements of the close of probation come into focus. At this time, Satan is at maximum power. He previously appeared on earth during the fifth trumpet and deceived many, and during the sixth trumpet, he took control of the world through force. Satan has destroyed the effectiveness of

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1 Matthew 24:36–41

2 Revelation 22:12

God's Law and the Holy Spirit by his dazzling miracles or by the threat of death, and everyone upon earth has made their decision. John writes, **"The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.'**

**"And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God: saying, 'We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small—and for destroying those who destroy the earth.'**

**"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 severe hailstorm."<sup>1</sup>**

These verses have five important elements:

1. At the time of the seventh trumpet, Jesus will be promoted again. Then, the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of Jesus. He has finished His priestly work of atonement. He will now begin to rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He will make a final proclamation, **"Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy."**<sup>2</sup>
2. Jesus will be angry because, for the most part, the world will have rejected His invitation to eternal life, and even worse, they have killed many who carried the invitation to the great wedding banquet! John says, **"I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus."**<sup>3</sup>
3. The nations will be angry (remember, this is a time of wrath), because of the outcome of the sixth trumpet. This trumpet describes the great

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1 Revelation 11:15–19

2 Revelation 22:11

3 Revelation 17:6 Compare this with the wedding parable in Matthew 22:1–14.

war that Satan will conduct to forcibly gain control of the world. What he can't get through deceit, he will take by sheer force.

4. The 24 elders who have observed Jesus' great work since 1844, agree that it is time to avenge the dead, reward the prophets, and destroy those who have destroyed the earth.
  - “The time has come to judge the dead.” The word, *judge*, in this phrase means to avenge. In this scene, the elders are saying that the time has come to *avenge* the death of God's people who died when the fifth seal was opened! Jesus will avenge the shed blood of His children by sending the seven last plagues. After pouring out the third plague, the angel with the vial says, **“You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.”**<sup>1</sup>
  - “The time has come to reward your servants the prophets.” When probation closes, God's people will no longer see death and destruction. **“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.”**<sup>2</sup> God will deliver the saints whose names are written in the Book of Life from death! Since probation is closed, the death of God's people would have no redemptive value, so King Jesus says, “Enough.”
  - “The time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth.” Satan, at the time of the seventh trumpet, will have fully established his headquarters and operations on earth. Those refusing to cooperate with his evil government will be destroyed. This is the purpose of the sixth trumpet war. The use of nuclear arms during this war will destroy the targets or impacted areas and it will render much of earth uninhabitable. The entire world will be convulsed with misery and agony. Even though Babylon finally rules the world, it will fall. Jesus personally will destroy Babylon the Great for it is the one destroying the earth. Revelation 18 describes this destruction.

1 Revelation 16:5–6

2 Daniel 12:1

5. The last point that we learn from the seventh trumpet is that God’s temple in heaven is opened and the ark of the covenant is visible. The temple is opened or vacated because court is over. There is no more mercy. The gospel has gone to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. The gospel invitation is withdrawn. Every decision has been made.

I believe that the people of earth will see the ark of the covenant that contains the Ten Commandments during the time of the trumpets. Moses constructed this very ark in the wilderness and the Ten Commandments, written by Jesus himself, still rest inside the ark. Around 600 BC, when the king of Babylon conquered Jerusalem, Jeremiah hid the ark in a cave, where it remains safe and secure until the time God chooses to reveal it. God will reveal the ark as a witness to the world, demonstrating that His great law has not been, and cannot be, changed. When the seventh trumpet sounds, then people will see another ark in heaven. The world will see that indeed, the one on earth is a copy of the one in heaven.

The effect of both arks appearing during this time is ominous. First, everyone has heard the gospel call to “worship God” according to His law. God’s Law, evidenced by the tablets of stone, serve as one of the witnesses reflecting His love for His people. Every person has decided whether to obey or disobey. The remnant have faith enough to obey the fourth commandment. The rest of the world put their faith in Satan and receive the mark of the *lamb-like* beast. When the wicked see the ark from heaven containing the Ten Commandments, they will be terrified at the condemnation they have brought upon themselves by enforcing laws of worship contrary to the Great Lawgiver. John says, **“There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.”**<sup>1</sup> Yet, in an unexplainable rebellion, the wicked only set their hearts and minds to destroy God’s people. Under Satan’s cruel leadership, they agree to destroy all of God’s remaining people at a set time.

### The Final Abomination

Babylon will issue a universal decree to rid the earth of God’s people. This decree will grant immunity to everyone wishing to kill the remnant at a certain point in time! The wicked don’t know that God’s people can’t be killed. Jesus will distract their rage with seven last plagues to frustrate their

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1 Revelation 14:11

plan. The wicked will receive all the suffering they have brought to God's children. The Lord says, **"It is mine to avenge. I will repay."**<sup>1</sup> Read Esther 3–9 and learn how Satan could bring about a universal death decree against God's people. Also, note how God turned the captivity of His people into a powerful testimony of His love. Esther's story is a close parallel of what will occur at the very end.

Daniel saw the universal death decree and was even told when it would occur. The angel said, **"From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days."**<sup>2</sup>

We can be comforted by these verses. We already know that the throwing down of the censer in heaven at the beginning of the trumpets marks the conclusion of the daily service of corporate mediation in heaven. This verse says that the universal death decree will be 1,290 days, about 43 months, later. Satan's final abominable act will be an attempt to rid the earth of God's people. Thus, it is the abomination that makes or causes desolation.

However, verse 12 says, **"Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days."** The entire time from the throwing down of the censer until the second coming of Jesus is 1,335 days. The time from the throwing down of the censer until the death decree is 1,290 days. Those who wait for and reach the 1,335th day will be blessed. These are especially blessed because they have endured the Great Tribulation and will hear Jesus say, **"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."**<sup>3</sup>

May God prepare each of us with the faith and endurance we need to receive this glorious blessing.

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1 Hebrews 10:30

2 Daniel 12:11–12

3 Matthew 25:34



# The Seven Last Plagues

The close of mercy will be like an event before Noah's flood. When the angel closed the door of the ark, those inside couldn't go outside and those outside couldn't get inside. At that time, every decision was sealed forever when the door closed. Jesus says of himself, **"These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens, no one can shut; and what he shuts, no one can open."**<sup>1</sup> Revelation 3:7 As it was in Noah's day, *so shall it be.*

All inhabitants of the earth will receive the mark of the beast except those who keep God's commandments and have the faith of Jesus. This mark will be necessary for survival. No one will be able to buy or sell except those who have the mark. The remnant will be cut off from any earthly support. They can only live if they live by faith. What a time to be on the earth.

The emotional distress during the time of wrath will be overwhelming for those who have not made it a practice to place their faith in Jesus. The coming tribulation will be greater than any disaster humans on earth have ever known, but Jesus has promised to provide the necessary grace we need to endure this awful time. No wonder Zephaniah wrote, **"Listen! The cry on the day of the Lord is bitter, the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry. That day will be a day of wrath—a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness—a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities."**<sup>2</sup> **"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**

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1 Revelation 3:7

2 Zephaniah 1:14-16

the whole earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth.”<sup>1</sup>

Luke added to Zephaniah’s description of the last days. **“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”**<sup>2</sup>

Don’t be overwhelmed! Paul says, **“God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”**<sup>3</sup>

Joel, describing the great testing time at the end of the world, said, **“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble. But the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.”**<sup>4</sup>

### **Babylon’s Reward**

Just as we cannot understand the depth of God’s mercy, we cannot understand the severity of God’s wrath contained in the seven last plagues. Revelation explains why Jesus is so angry with Babylon and those who receive the mark of the beast.

**“It [Babylon, the seven-headed, ten-horned beast] was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life.”**<sup>5</sup>

**“It ordered them [the people of earth] to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the**

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1 Zephaniah 1:18

2 Luke 21:25–26

3 1 Corinthians 10:13

4 Joel 3:14–16

5 Revelation 13:7–8

image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.”<sup>1</sup>

**“I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>**

**“They [the leaders of Babylon] will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because He is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”<sup>3</sup>**

**“In her [the prostitute, the one-world congress] was found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth.”<sup>4</sup>**

These verses contain a great deal more information than you might casually notice. On the surface, they describe a one-sided conflict between people. God’s holy people don’t kill others. However, the larger issue in these verses is the cumulative effects of sin and rebellion within the human race. These verses describe an open, willful, and explicit rebellion against God, His gospel, and His messengers.

Psychologists and social scientists have written extensively on the cumulative nature of behavior. For example, an abused child often becomes a child abuser. The child of an alcoholic often adopts the attitudes of his parents and, in adulthood, may become drug-dependent or codependent. Sin has a degenerative effect on succeeding generations.

The second commandment addresses this very point. Jesus says, **“You shall not make for yourself an image 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 parents 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.”<sup>5</sup>**

This commandment states that Jesus is a jealous God. He is jealous for our happiness and well-being. He is jealous for our sakes and not His.

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1 Revelation 13:14–15

2 Revelation 17:6

3 Revelation 17:14

4 Revelation 18:24

5 Exodus 20:4–6

Human jealousy means burning with selfish interest, but God, as any loving parent, is jealous to benefit His children. Just as a loving parent deeply wants his or her child to succeed and be happy, Jesus wants no less for His children.

If you briefly analyze the second commandment, you might think that Jesus punishes the children of sinful parents because their parents are evil. However, a deeper study would reveal that Jesus does not unjustly punish the descendants of sinful parents. Rather, this commandment affirms that our Creator grants the power of choice. Because we have reasoning powers, we can make choices that lead to destruction and choices that lead to life. Jesus allows sin to continue within a family or society until it self-destructs. However, when the world corporately reaches this point, He steps in.

We can see these two points demonstrated in society before the flood. **“The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.”**<sup>1</sup>

### Entertainment Tonight

Today, we shudder at the thought of lions eating Christians in ancient Roman amphitheatres in the name of entertainment. We call gladiators fighting to death before a bloodthirsty crowd *barbaric*. Actually, we are no different than the ancient pagans when it comes to entertainment each evening.

Videos and the internet have played an enormous role in destroying our social values. Generations of children have grown up watching violence, murder, theft, rape, lying, cheating, deception, perversions, and illicit sex. Is there any wonder that we have become corrupted by observing such rubbish? Take sin out of videos and who would watch them? What would be entertaining?

Ask most young people what they want to achieve after attending university and their usual answer will be for materialistic rather than service-

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1 Genesis 6:5–7

oriented goals. Each succeeding generation is becoming more self-centered than the preceding one. Parents can't blame their offspring for having these values either. The older generation bears a great responsibility for the present condition. Today, most of America's children are reared in human farms we call day-care centers while both parents work to possess material goods. The family unit has disintegrated because we deem our possessions more important than our children. Think about tomorrow. What will be the cumulative effects of our sins?

The problem is that we have broken all Ten Commandments, especially the first four commands which tell us how we should love our Creator. When we forget God, we forget our neighbor. We become self-centered. By neglecting the first four commandments, we have voided the last six commandments. The royal commandments have been set aside. We now love ourselves as we should love our neighbors.

Jesus, talking about the last days, said, **“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.”**<sup>1</sup> Paul, describing the last days, said, **“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”**<sup>2</sup>

### Consolidation of Power

A dangerous process in the socio-political system is occurring. Fewer and fewer people are establishing control of the world's economic and political systems. For example, in the US, 5% of our population owns more than the remaining 95%! The rich are getting richer, and the number of poor people is increasing. In just a matter of time, the wealthy and the political elite will form a global economic body to control the world.

Revelation indicates there will be a global consolidation of wealth and power. When Babylon collapses, it will be the merchants and the kings of the earth who are crying. **“When the kings of the earth who committed**

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1 Matthew 24:12

2 2 Timothy 3:1–5

**adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: ‘Woe! Woe to you, great city, you mighty city of Babylon! In one hour your doom has come!’ The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes anymore.”<sup>1</sup>**

When the trumpets begin, the world’s current leadership will respond quickly through the various communication links, political connections, and trade relationships. The first four trumpets bring horrific destruction and each government will quickly implement contingency laws to deal with the state of emergency. These laws will limit individual freedom all around the world to increase the possibility of survival.

Since the trumpets will be considered acts of God, religious leaders will become very powerful because they will have direct influence upon lawmakers. Lawmakers will cooperate with the suggestions of clerics because they know that in a state of emergency, people are spiritually inclined. The clerics will say that the survivors need to appease God. The lawmakers will respond with a flurry of laws requiring righteous behavior. As nations all over the world attempt to deal with the multitude of problems associated with the trumpets, they quickly turn to legislation for economic stability. The laws will seem reasonable to most people and penalties for civil disobedience will be severe.

### **New Laws for Behavior**

In the US, political leaders will pass laws requiring reverence for Sunday. Interestingly, most states already have laws regarding the sanctity of Sunday observance. However, these laws are not uniformly enforced currently. At first, religious and political leaders will defend Sunday laws due to economic necessity, but as time progresses, they will claim that the reason for the trumpets is because we have forgotten God. The irony is that man’s solution to the trumpets will be opposite to the gospel invitation! At the very time the 144,000 are proclaiming the gospel, saying “Worship the Creator on His holy day,” political leaders will be making laws respecting a day of worship contrary to God’s Law. Because most people in the US think Sunday is the Lord’s Day, the laws will support the sacredness of Sunday. Thus, reverence for Sunday will appear to be a reasonable solution

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1 Revelation 18:9–11

to the problem. It is interesting to note that today, very few people actually feel Sunday is all that sacred and thus keep the day holy. The trumpets will change this attitude overnight.

The centerpiece of Revelation's story for the US is that Sunday is not, nor has it ever been, the Lord's Day. There is no support for the sacredness of Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, or any other day in the Bible except the seventh day. Even more, there is no commandment explaining how another day is to be kept if it is indeed a day of worship.

When the US passes laws respecting Sunday as a day of worship, many dissidents will oppose the laws. Some will argue the loss of *constitutional rights* and others will intellectually argue for "freedom of worship." However, neither of these groups will be able to hold back the tide of religious zeal.

The saints will argue that the trumpets have a specific purpose to call attention to the worship of earth's Creator on His holy Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. This controversy over the day of worship will totally eclipse all other controversies such as abortion, human rights, and environmental problems. These current controversies are nothing compared to the coming controversy surrounding the gospel. As a result of the trumpets, the US will experience economic, religious, and civil anarchy. Under the guise of patriotism, America will repudiate its Bill of Rights!

As the controversy intensifies, the issues become clearly delineated. By the time the fourth trumpet occurs, every mind will focus on the all-consuming issue of survival. The 144,000 will tell Revelation's story all over the world. The survivors will learn why the seven first plagues are falling and why they should obey God's Law. They will hear the first angel's message, which says, "Worship the Creator according to His holy law." God's servants will invite everyone to receive the everlasting gospel and live by faith. The clarity of Revelation's story and the power of the Holy Spirit will enhance these presentations. The Bible and the Holy Spirit will witness to every man, woman, and child. The gospel will reach multiple millions of the US population in a very short period.

### **America Chooses the Lamb-like Beast**

Despite the unmistakable evidence provided from scriptures and the power of the first angel's message, the US will continue a downward course. Leaders will make more laws regarding the sanctity of Sunday and increase

the penalties for disobedience. Satan will personally arrive on earth during the fifth trumpet claiming to be God. Most Americans (and the world) will ultimately accept this villain of mankind as the true God. The great American motto, “In God we Trust,” will be dedicated to the lamb-like beast.

Satan knows all about Revelation’s story. His greatest thrill will be to deceive people at a time when truth was never so clear. He has a simple goal to destroy the world before Jesus returns. He plans to bring contempt for God’s Law and rule the world by enforcing a false day of worship and controlling human activities through the mark of the beast.

### **The Wrath of God—Full Strength**

By the time probation closes, every person on earth will have heard the arguments of the everlasting gospel and made a decision. The people of earth will either choose to obey Jesus or obey Satan. Those obeying Satan have put their faith in him, and they will join with Satan to war against those who refuse to comply. Those who will receive the mark of the beast have rejected the clearest presentations of Bible truth. They will turn their backs on God’s mercy. Even worse, these people will passionately work to destroy the saints and covet the commendation of the Devil.

Even though Satan and Babylon have conquered the world,<sup>1</sup> John saw the victory of the saints over Satan and his followers. **“And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb.”**<sup>2</sup> In losing, they win! Jesus said, **“Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”**<sup>3</sup>

The seven last plagues will fall on all who have put their faith in Satan and received the mark of the beast. The seven last plagues will be horrific. God will reward the wicked for their cruelty to His people. The seven last plagues will contain God’s wrath—poured out in full strength.

1. Terrible sores
2. Sea turns to blood

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1 Revelation 13:7

2 Revelation 15:2–3

3 Matthew 10:39

3. Springs of water turn to blood
4. Sun scorches people with fire
5. Satan's kingdom plunged into darkness
6. Armageddon
7. Second coming / Great fiery hailstones

These plagues will not affect God's people. **“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 the punishment of the wicked.”**<sup>1</sup> These plagues are beyond human comprehension because the world has never seen God's wrath—full strength. In fact, Daniel says it will be a time of trouble as never before.<sup>2</sup>

The first four trumpets will affect one-third of the earth and subsequently, the seven last plagues will impact the entire world! Many of the seven last plagues parallel the destruction caused by the seven trumpets. For example, the fifth trumpet will mark Satan's arrival, and the fifth plague will mark the *unmasking* of Satan. Satan, prior to the fifth plague, will have blamed the saints for the trumpets and the first four last plagues due to their *rebellious* behavior. When Jesus pours out the fifth plague, the world will learn that this creature claiming to be God is not God—for the true God would not destroy His own throne.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the light of truth will shine and the religious and political leaders of the world will recognize they have been following a demon. This realization starts a domino-like collapse of Babylon. John says, **“The beast [Babylon] and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute [World Congress]. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.”**<sup>4</sup>

Satan will rally the wicked one last time attempting to maintain control of what is left of the world. He will send his evil angels throughout the earth in a great deceptive ploy to destroy the saints, who allegedly *put a curse on his throne*. Satan will entice the kings of the earth to unite in a universal death decree. John says of Satan's representatives, **“They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to**

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1 Psalm 91:7–8

2 Daniel 12:1

3 Revelation 16:10–11

4 Revelation 17:16

gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.”<sup>1</sup> “Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”<sup>2</sup>

### Armageddon

The battle called Armageddon is the sixth plague. John warned us that Satan’s demons will deceive the world into a false unity, with the ultimate goal of destroying the saints through a universal death decree. Daniel also saw the intended destruction of the saints (the abomination that causes desolation).<sup>3</sup> The kings of the earth will agree on the simultaneous destruction of everyone who worships on Saturday and gather to the place known in Hebrew as *Armageddon*.

Remember, in Revelation 9 the name of the angel king from the Abyss meant *destroyer* both in Greek and Hebrew.<sup>4</sup> Just as this title describes Satan, the Greek equivalent of Armageddon describes a place or a state the world reaches. The word Armageddon comes from two words, “har megido” which is translated Armageddon. These two words mean *the mountain of God*, or *the place of God*.

The world under Satan’s leadership will reach the height of rebellion against God and His saints during the fifth plague. At this time, the entire world will agree to destroy the very people Jesus is coming to save. This will be the final straw. The wrath of Jesus will have no restriction. The world is planning to destroy the *apple of His eye*. The world has brought its rebellion to *the mountain of God*. The world will know, as in Elijah’s day on Mount Carmel, who is the true God. The world will see Him and face His wrath. John said, **“The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’ Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.**

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1 Revelation 16:14

2 Revelation 16:16

3 Daniel 12:11

4 Revelation 9:11

**From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.”<sup>1</sup>**

John also said that the people of earth will cry out: **“They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’”<sup>2</sup>**

Paul wrote that the splendor of Christ’s coming will destroy all the living. **“And then the lawless one [the man of lawlessness] will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.”<sup>3</sup>**

Zephaniah wrote, **“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 earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth.”<sup>4</sup>**

### **Earth is Left Desolate**

The hail that will fall on the earth at the second coming is like the fiery hailstones that fell upon the earth during the first trumpet. The difference between them is the size of the hailstones and the amount of devastation. The hail of the first trumpet will burn 1/3 of the earth, trees, and all the grass, while the hail of the seventh plague will burn Babylon up. John said that this fire at the second coming will destroy the beast (Babylon, having seven heads and 10 horns) and the False Prophet (Babylon’s eighth king, its lamb-like leader—the Devil). **“The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.”<sup>5</sup>**

The rider on the horse is King Jesus. John wrote, **“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing**

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1 Revelation 16:17–21

2 Revelation 6:16–17

3 2 Thessalonians 2:8

4 Zephaniah 1:18

5 Revelation 19:20–21

**fire, and on his head are many crowns.”<sup>1</sup> “On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”<sup>2</sup>**

At this time, Jesus will have completed the conquest that He began when He opened the first seal.

### **Saints Taken to Heaven**

The second coming will be a scene beyond expression. As Jesus draws near the earth, He will resurrect the righteous dead to see Him. Paul wrote, **“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”<sup>3</sup>**

Jesus will not stand on the earth at the second coming. Instead, the saints meet Him in the air. They return with Jesus to heaven for one thousand years. John says of the righteous dead, **“They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.)”<sup>4</sup>**

During the thousand years, John said, **“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.”<sup>5</sup> “They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”<sup>6</sup>** For one thousand years, the saints will open the books and review the judgment process. No doubts will remain as to Jesus’ fairness. The saints will be satisfied with His eternal decision regarding each person. They will also determine the amount of restitution required when the wicked are resurrected. Meanwhile, the earth is desolate and the wicked are dead. Satan and his angels are returned to the Abyss where they wait for divine justice.

### **Satan Lives On**

Satan, the False Prophet mentioned in Revelation 19 will be burned up at the second coming, yet he will remain alive during the millennium.

1 Revelation 19:11–12

2 Revelation 19:16

3 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17

4 Revelation 20:4–5

5 Revelation 20:4

6 Revelation 20:6

This is because Satan (like Jesus) will not be *limited* to the body of a man. Remember, Satan will be allowed out of the Abyss (or spirit world) during the fifth trumpet. At that time, he will take the form of a man but remain an angel. At the second coming, Satan's apparition of a man claiming to be God will be destroyed, but the evil angel king and his demons will remain alive until the end of the thousand years. At the time of the second coming, John wrote, **"And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time."**<sup>1</sup>

### Saints Return to Earth

After the saints have finished a thousand years of research into God's character, they will assess appropriate restitution for the wicked, and the New Jerusalem and the saints will return to earth with Jesus. Then, Jesus will raise the wicked in a second resurrection. The first resurrection occurred previously at the second coming, and the second resurrection will occur a thousand years later. Jesus said, **"Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them."**<sup>2</sup>

The Bible is very clear that there are two resurrections: one to eternal life and one to eternal death. Jesus said, **"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned."**<sup>3</sup>

After Jesus has resurrected the wicked at the end of the thousand years, He will release Satan from the Abyss (spirit world) for a short time. Satan will immediately stir up this vast multitude into rebellion. He will convince the numberless crowd that Jesus intends to do them great harm. So, he will incite a dramatic uprising to destroy the New Jerusalem and the saints within who have come down to earth.<sup>4</sup>

1 Revelation 20:1–3

2 Revelation 20:6

3 John 5:28–29

4 Revelation 20:7–10

When the wicked rush with rage against the Holy City, Jesus speaks. The multitude stops in their tracks and silence falls on the breathless mob for about half an hour.<sup>1</sup> Jesus, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, speaks. The anger and rebellion of the countless mob dissipates. Like lightning piercing the darkness, the wicked realize they stand before their Maker. He is not a tyrant, nor is He angry. He speaks with great authority.

Jesus will explain the Plan of Salvation to the waiting multitude. As the wicked witness God's love, each person will understand how salvation works. Jesus will present each person's life from the open books of record. The wicked will see their deeds just as God has seen them. There will be no room for excuses or self-justification and no place to run. He who sees the heart and reads the motives will present each life record of sin and rebellion for what it truly is, with unvarnished clarity. The wicked will know why they are condemned. They will know who Jesus is, why He died on Calvary, and why they cannot be saved. The wicked will clearly see that they are outside the gates of the Holy City because they chose evil instead of righteousness.

At the end of this revelation, everyone will bow before Jesus with deepest emotion. The wicked will bow before His justice and the righteous will bow before His mercy. Jesus said, **“Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength.’ All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the Lord and will make their boast in him.”**<sup>2</sup>

Every knee will bow before Jesus. Those who bow in faith before the close of probation will be saved. Those who bow after the close of probation will be lost. In both cases, all creatures will recognize that **“In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength.”**

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1 Revelation 8:1

2 Isaiah 45:23–25



# The Gift of Prophecy

Revelation identifies the remnant as those who keep God's commands and have the testimony of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> In Revelation 19:10 we learned that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Since we know that Satan has obscured God's Law, should we be surprised to learn that he has also counterfeited the spirit of prophecy?

The spirit of prophecy is the gift of knowing the unknown. A dictionary definition of prophecy is a prediction made under divine influence and direction, or a discourse made or delivered by a prophet under divine direction.

The Bible uses the idea of prophesying under divine influence and the gift or ability to prophesy interchangeably. King Saul, for example, received the ability to prophesy even though he was not considered a prophet. **“When he and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him [King Saul]; the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he joined in their prophesying. When all those who had formerly known him saw him prophesying with the prophets, they asked each other, ‘What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?’”**<sup>2</sup>

Is the gift of prophecy in all churches today? Is this gift prevalent throughout the world? Is it limited to Christianity? What characteristics distinguish those who speak on God's behalf? How can we tell if someone is truly giving a revelation that came from God? What distinguishes a *prophetic revelation* from a *sanctified or educated guess*? We must study these issues carefully, for there is a growing interest in manifestations of supernatural power.

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1 Revelation 12:17

2 1 Samuel 10:10–11

### Paul Wrote About Spiritual Gifts

The most eloquent writer in the Bible on the gifts of the Spirit was the apostle Paul. Perhaps his position on the subject is appropriately encompassing because, of all writers in the Bible, he was one of the wealthiest recipients of spiritual gifts. Few would contest that Paul stood head and shoulders above his contemporaries due to his combination of natural ability and spiritual gifts. He influenced the theology of Christianity more than any of his peers.

Paul explained there are several different gifts of the Spirit. These include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, discernment of spirits, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophesying. He stressed that the gifts have a direct purpose to bring growth and harmony to the church instead of chaos. Here are a few of his comments.

1. Paul wrote that the gift of prophecy is for believers. This directly contrasts with the gift of tongues which is for unbelievers.<sup>1</sup> Paul also explained that there may be an ecstatic experience of joy in the Lord, where a person may speak in a language beyond words; however, he emphasized such experiences are to be private and not public.<sup>2</sup>
2. Paul wrote that the manifestation of spiritual gifts is given for the common good of all.<sup>3</sup> This text does not imply that every believer receives the manifestation of some spiritual gift. Rather, the *manifestation* of spiritual gifts occurs for the common good of all mankind—believers and nonbelievers alike. Paul recognized the value of spiritual gifts and encouraged the church to seek them, especially the gift of prophecy.<sup>4</sup> However, just because a person desires a gift does not mean they will receive it.
3. Paul wrote the Holy Spirit determines what gift (if any) a person receives.<sup>5</sup> He went to great lengths in Chapter 12 to explain that the body is made up of many parts. Since the body of Christ has many members, the body benefits when individuals use the gifts they have

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1 1 Corinthians 14:22

2 1 Corinthians 14:2, 9–17

3 1 Corinthians 12:7

4 1 Corinthians 14:1

5 1 Corinthians 12:11

been granted<sup>1</sup> He asserted that God **has not** appointed every person to possess all of His gifts, such as those of an apostle, prophet, miracle worker, or teacher.

4. Paul stressed that the grace of the Spirit is more important than the gifts of the Spirit. Paul advised us to desire the greater gifts: faith, hope, and love.<sup>2</sup> The gifts are temporal, while the graces of the Spirit are eternal. Paul maintained that if we speak with the tongues of gifted men or even angels and have not love, it is nothing. If we have the gift of prophecy and the gift of faith and have no love, it is nothing. If we give all we have to the poor and die a martyr's death and have no love, it is nothing.<sup>3</sup> Love, agape love (love that is God-like), is more important than all other gifts. In fact, the gifts of tongues, knowledge, and prophecy will pass away, but love will never cease.<sup>4</sup>

### The Prophetic Call

The Bible does not provide a crisp definition or job description of what it takes to become a prophet. Apparently, the post or job of being a prophet is an *appointment* rather than the achievement of a sanctified state. Each appointment in the Scriptures appears to be unique to the circumstances of time and place. For example, God called the boy Samuel to be a prophet during the time of the judges of Israel. God called the physician Luke to be a prophet during the time of Christ. God also called Anna and the four daughters of Philip to be prophets.<sup>5</sup> Prophets are human beings and have failings. Remember Jonah and the whale? Did you ever hear about the infamous Balaam?<sup>6</sup> The Bible gives many illustrations to increase our understanding of the prophetic gift.

### Prophets Are Not Perfect

Abraham, the venerable father of Israel, was not perfect even though he was a prophet. In fact, the first mention of the term prophet in the Bible is in Genesis and it applied to Abraham. **“Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh**

1 1 Corinthians 12:27–30

2 1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:13

3 1 Corinthians 13:1–3

4 1 Corinthians 13:8–10

5 Luke 2:36; Acts 21:9

6 Numbers 22–23

and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.

“But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, ‘You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.’

“Now Abimelech had not gone near her, so he said, ‘Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? Did he not say to me, “She is my sister,” and didn’t she also say, “He is my brother”? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.’

“Then God said to him in the dream, ‘Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die.’”<sup>1</sup>

The Bible called Abraham a prophet because God directly communicated through him. Abraham prayed for Abimelech and God spared his life. Jesus spoke to Abraham from time to time and the relationship between them was recognized by those who came to know Abraham. This scripture reveals that prophets can make serious mistakes. Even though Sarah was Abraham’s half-sister, she was his wife. The prophet intentionally misled Abimelech on this matter because Abraham feared that Abimelech would kill him and take his beautiful wife.

### Only God Appoints His Prophets

The Bible treats the office of prophet as a divine appointment. When God has a spokesman, He speaks through that person. **“He [the Lord] said, ‘Listen to my words: “When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams.””**<sup>2</sup>

The prophet cannot of his own power prove his divine appointment as spokesman for God. Only God can confirm or demonstrate the appointment. Notice how this happened to Elijah. **“At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: ‘Lord, the God of Abraham,**

1 Genesis 20:1–7

2 Numbers 12:6

**Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.”<sup>1</sup>**

The decision to become a prophet is not made by man, neither is the office hereditary. God chooses or appoints prophets. He told Elijah, **“Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet.”<sup>2</sup>**

### **Devine Authority**

When God gives someone the ability to prophesy, people recognize God’s power is uniquely upon that person. Remember King Saul’s ability to prophesy? Notice this one about Samuel: **“And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>**

### **Obedience to God Instead of False Prophets**

A prophet cannot obey the words of another prophet if they are contrary to what he has been told. Read the story found in 1 Kings 13:11–30 to learn what can happen if a prophet disobeys God’s directions.

### **Prophets Must Not Dishonor God**

God is very protective about the way prophets honor or dishonor His name. He will not tolerate the defamation of His name.<sup>4</sup> The story of Naaman and greedy Gehazi confirms this point.<sup>5</sup>

### **Consequences for False Prophets**

God warned Israel that no one should imitate the role of prophet. If anyone claimed to be a prophet, but God had not appointed them, they would suffer fatal consequences. Even more, if the testimony of a former prophet leads people to stray from God’s commands, he was to be put to death. Jesus said, **“If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, ‘Let us follow other gods’ (gods you have not known) ‘and let us worship them,’ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God**

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1 1 Kings 18:36

2 1 Kings 19:16

3 1 Samuel 3:20

4 Ezekiel 36:22–23

5 2 Kings 5:19–27

**is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the Lord your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. That prophet or dreamer must be put to death for inciting rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. That prophet or dreamer tried to turn you from the way the Lord your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.”<sup>1</sup>**

### **Responsibility for Prophetic Declarations**

When God speaks through a prophet, the situation is unavoidably difficult because if a person rejects the words of a prophet, God will hold the person accountable. More importantly, if the prophet has spoken presumptuously, he must be put to death. The litmus test of a prophet is accuracy in prediction. **“I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.**

**“You may say to yourselves, ‘How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?’ If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.”<sup>2</sup>**

When people refuse to heed the words of God’s prophets, God may send them a delusion that they might be condemned.<sup>3</sup> Read a most incredible story in the Old Testament from which Paul took special insight.<sup>4</sup>

To summarize, the role and work of a prophet is very serious business. God does not trifle with the responsibilities of this office. God holds His prophets to the highest standards of accountability. Those who presume to speak for God when God has not spoken to them are evil impostors. Those who assume a prophet’s authority and responsibility when God has

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1 Deuteronomy 13:1–5

2 Deuteronomy 18:19–22

3 2 Thessalonians 2:11–12

4 1 Kings 22:5–23

not spoken to them will be severely punished. This is among the gravest offenses a mortal can commit.

We can draw three conclusions from the previous illustrations.

- The prophet must carefully and fearlessly represent what God has said or revealed to him. In many scriptures, the prophets indicated that messages from God came to them in an audible or visionary process leaving no doubt in their minds that God had provided the revelation.
- Old Testament history of 1,500 years indicates that those called to be prophets usually had few friends. Jesus referred to the short lifespans of his prophets.<sup>1</sup>
- False prophets often exist as contemporaries of true prophets. Strangely, when the Bible did not mention true prophets, it did mention a few false prophets. It might be possible that when God appointed prophets, Satan was allowed the same privilege. This statement leads us to the second identifying mark of the remnant in Revelation. The gift of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant and this gift stands in direct opposition to false prophets having similar powers. So, the ultimate question is how can we tell if a prophet is speaking for God?

### Testing the Prophet

Testing or proving the validity of a spiritual claim is difficult at best. If someone claims to have the gift of knowledge or discernment, healing, or the gift of faith, how should we test the claim to see if it is true or false? Why would we want to test the gifts anyway? The core issue behind the manifestation of gifts is credibility. Who represents God? Who speaks for God? Who speaks the truth and what is the truth? All claims of spiritual gifts must be tested. Paul said, **“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”**<sup>2</sup> John also warned, **“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”**<sup>3</sup>

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1 Matthew 23:37

2 1 Timothy 4:1

3 1 John 4:1

### Satan's Purpose

Satan has two reasons for deceiving people. He wants to lead them into rebellion against God, and he wants them to destroy God's people. Revelation demonstrates this process and predicts that Satan and his demons will be quite successful on both counts.

**“And it [Satan] performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.”<sup>1</sup>**

Satan and his demons are determined to deceive the world. We must understand that his lies are very close to the truth, and we need to know if someone speaks on behalf of God through the gift of prophecy. The key question is how should we test the validity of a person claiming to have received a message from God?

### Five Tests of a True Prophet

The Bible mentions five tests to determine if a person claiming to be a prophet of God is a true prophet or a false prophet.

**Test 1. You will recognize them by the tangible outcomes and impact of their ministry.**

Jesus, knowing the last days would be filled with false prophets, said we should measure prophets by their results. **“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”<sup>2</sup>**

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1 Revelation 13:13–15

2 Matthew 7:15–20

**Test 2. Be skeptical of any prophet working miracles.**

Jesus, knowing that false prophets could heal the sick, cast out demons, and work wonderful miracles, went on to say that miracles cannot establish evidence or credibility. **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”**<sup>1</sup> Imagine how shocked many false prophets will be when they learn that their wonderful miracles, done in the name of Jesus, occurred through the power of Satan!

Jesus warned that many would come in His name at the end of the world and deceive many people with great signs and miracles. **“At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time.”**<sup>2</sup>

Satan has carefully set the stage for a series of *demonstrations* attracting significant attention which will convince the world that people are currently in heaven or hell. Many of these miracles will involve direct and open communication with those who have died. Satan will use apparitions to confirm his deceptions by having these dead people say that false doctrines are truth. A multitude of people will receive these delusions with enthusiasm because they don't know what the Bible says. In reality, this is the work of demons. Now you can see why God's power granted to the Two Witnesses, His Law, and the Holy Spirit, is so great. They not only combat the demons from the Abyss, they must overcome great ignorance.

Isaiah saw the great danger of people turning to these exciting and mysterious events. He warned, **“When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?”**

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1 Matthew 7:21–23

2 Matthew 24:23–25

**Consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”<sup>1</sup>**

The term *law* that Isaiah used refers to the first five books of the Bible, a phrase we often see in Scripture. The term, *testimony* refers to God’s Ten Commandments. The ark which contained the tables of stone is often called the *ark of the testimony*.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah was saying that if a prophet’s words do not agree with the Scriptures and God’s Law, the prophet is full of darkness. In truth, the false teaching of the immortality of the soul has become almost universally accepted and predisposes most of the world to accept the teachings of false prophets.

### **Test 3. The prophet obeys God’s commandments.**

John placed a great deal of weight on the importance of God’s Law. Persons who lead others to rebel against God’s commandments cannot have the true gift of prophecy. In Revelation, John identified the remnant as having the gift of prophecy and *obeying God’s commandments*.”

Throughout his writings, John stressed obedience to God—not as a means of salvation, but as a result of love for God. **“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”<sup>3</sup>**

Jesus, our creator, has the right to expect that His human beings will be obedient. He created us *and* all the laws by which we live. We cannot violate natural or moral laws without serious consequences. Jesus gives us a choice to obey and worship Him. He will not force us.

A person who has the true gift of prophecy must comply with the truths God has revealed. John says, **“Whoever says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”<sup>4</sup>**

1 Isaiah 8:19–20

2 Exodus 25:21–22

3 John 14:21

4 1 John 2:4–6

The seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment will be of particular importance during the trumpets so this test is critical.

#### **Test 4. The prophet strengthens the work of the gospel.**

Paul wrote, **“But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.”**<sup>1</sup> Individuals with the gift of prophecy should uplift and strengthen the believers. A true prophet’s life should reflect the fruits of the Spirit, guiding others towards repentance. The messages of genuine prophets inspire men and women to seek repentance. Paul also wrote, **“But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, ‘God is really among you!’”**<sup>2</sup>

#### **Test 5. The prophet must correctly interpret Bible prophecy.**

Jesus is omniscient. He has revealed the future in the Bible to His servants, the prophets, and they won’t miss the mark. They will not add to the record written in Revelation or take away from it.

### **Summary**

The gift of prophecy is a complex subject. Most people in the world are unaware of the demonic forces that are aligned to lead them astray. Our generation is peculiarly cursed with insight into technology while simultaneously having great blindness to spiritual matters.

The Holy Spirit has bestowed gifts at various times and ways to help God’s people complete the commission to carry the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Those who exercise the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit do it to accomplish the gospel commission, not to draw attention to themselves.

An evil and wicked generation seeks signs as proof of credibility.<sup>3</sup> God is not challenged by demands for signs for the Devil can turn sticks into snakes too.<sup>4</sup> The Devil can heal the sick, cast out demons, speak wonderful truths,

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1 1 Corinthians 14:3

2 1 Corinthians 14:24–25

3 Matthew 12:39

4 Exodus 7:11

and appear very righteous and beneficial to accomplish his deceitful ends.

Revelation predicts that an identifying mark of the obedient remnant will be the gift of prophecy. The key distinction between the miracles performed by Satan and those by God's servants lies in their purpose: Satan's miracles support defiance against God's Word, whereas God's miracles affirm the truths found in Scripture. This is the bottom line. This separates true prophets from false prophets.



# The Making of the Remnant

This final chapter offers both a review and an invitation. Revisiting the gospel is crucial because it compels us to make a decision. Over time, we will either embrace or reject the gospel, driven by our inherent need to resolve internal conflicts. Some individuals attempt to sidestep challenging decisions by relegating them to the back of their minds, often thinking, *I'll consider this tomorrow*. However, procrastination is, in itself, the decision to not make a decision. Imagine proposing marriage to someone and the response is “let me think about it.” That answer is essentially rejection, isn't it? The risk of delaying a decision is that it can gradually lead to a more definitive rejection unless we consciously choose otherwise. When it comes to the gospel, it is vital to heed the Holy Spirit's guidance. The more we resist His promptings, the harder it becomes to respond positively.

This chapter also includes an invitation to read this book again. If the Holy Spirit has impressed you that this message is important, you need to read it again because your understanding of the gospel will increase 100% the second time. You will find that the prophetic details become much clearer and more meaningful. Also, once you understand what Revelation is about, you need to find an interested friend to share this message with. **“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.”**<sup>1</sup>

### The Proclamation of the Gospel

The full gospel must reach every person before Jesus comes. John said, **“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe,**

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1 Revelation 22:17

language and people.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus said, “**And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**”<sup>2</sup> The question is, “Who will help spread the gospel?” We know that the 144,000 will lead the way during the trumpets, but they can’t do their work alone. They need the help and support of the remnant!

### What is the Gospel?

A counterfeiter would never print a \$9 bill. People would immediately recognize the folly. A \$9 bill couldn’t be a counterfeit since real \$9 bills don’t exist. Thus, a counterfeit has to be an imitation of something that exists. The Devil has counterfeited the gospel and his imitations are in every land. In the US, the Devil’s counterfeit is *almost* indistinguishable from the real gospel.

Many people honestly believe Satan’s counterfeit gospel. Jesus understands. He looks down upon the earth with love at those living up to all they believe to be true. In His great mercy, He accepts those who do not know the truths of the gospel. Jesus does not hold a person responsible for the truth he doesn’t know. On the contrary. James tells us that sin is held against us **when** we know better and **then** refuse to do it. “**If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.**”<sup>3</sup>

The Lord loves us with a love beyond human understanding. Those living up to all they know to be right glorify God, and He is pleased. Peter said, “**For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.**”<sup>4</sup> Because truth has been obscured from most people by Satan’s devices, Jesus will soon enlighten the entire world with the gospel. Those who are sincere in heart will receive the full gospel and become part of the remnant. Those who recognize the confirmation of the Holy Spirit will move forward and receive the gospel truth as it reaches every nation, kindred, tongue, and people! Thus, Jesus will gather the remnant. He said, “**I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.**”<sup>5</sup>

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1 Revelation 14:6

2 Matthew 24:14

3 James 4:17

4 1 Peter 3:12

5 John 10:16

During the trumpets, those who respond to Jesus' call through the gospel will unite as a group known as the remnant. Individuals will face a choice: to accept the gospel and, by faith, obey Jesus' commandments as proclaimed in the first angel's message, or to reject the gospel and consequently receive the mark of the beast. There will be no middle ground. The swift progression of events, along with strict laws mandating a specific day of worship will compel everyone to make a rapid decision.

### **The Gospel and its Counterfeit**

The true gospel is the complete story of salvation. The gospel explains the role of our Creator, the nature of man, the sinless life of Jesus on our behalf, the work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary as our Mediator, and His second coming. If you reflect on the previous sentence, you will observe God's profound love, as expressed through the five foundational teachings of the gospel. They are easy to remember, as they each begin with the letter "S":

1. Salvation by faith
2. Sanctuary in heaven
3. State of the dead
4. Second coming of Jesus
5. Sabbath worship

The Devil has distorted and ruined each of these teachings. We will examine how he has created the five counterfeits of the gospel within the Christian world:

#### **1. Counterfeit—Salvation by Faith**

One of Satan's most powerful counterfeits is that salvation either comes when we obey God, or we intellectually assent to what is true. Satan's trickery on this subject is very subtle. He can deceive an evil person into thinking he is righteous! For example, Satan led the Pharisees to think they were righteous even though they were far away from the kingdom. Jesus said, **"On the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."**<sup>1</sup>

Asking a person what he believes is not enough. The Pharisees thought they were righteous. So, to see what a person believes, we have to do some fruit inspection. Jesus said, **"Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad**

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1 Matthew 23:28

**tree bears bad fruit . . . and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.”**<sup>1</sup> The problem is that what people say and what they do is inconsistent. Here are two extreme examples.

The first example describes a religious type we will call *workers*. A worker can say, “I’m saved by faith,” while working his way to heaven at the same time. We can usually identify the people who have this problem by their zealous and/or rigorous obedience to the teachings or ideals of their denomination. Workers tend to see sin as acts of commission . . . sins or wrongful deeds acted out. Living by the rules is very important to these people. In their hearts, they have confidence that they are saved because they are obedient to the rules. They look at themselves and see very little wrong. Workers, in day-to-day living, regard obedience as the *primary process* through which salvation occurs even though they say that salvation comes by faith!

The Jewish religion at the time of Christ typified this great deception. They were blinded by the sin of pride. They couldn’t see why they didn’t have salvation. After all, they didn’t see anything wrong with themselves. These people tend to criticize those breaking the rules but rarely speak about the greater sins of omission. Here is a paradox. Workers tend to see rule violations as great sins while disregarding the spiritual or physical needs of those around them. Jesus said to the Pharisees, **“Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.”**<sup>2</sup> **“And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.”**<sup>3</sup>

The coming exam will overwhelm these people. Workers will not be able to obey God, for civil laws will become so strict that obedience will be impossible! Remember how Hitler threatened the Germans if they should help an enemy of the Reich? The workers will have no option but to worship the beast to avoid suffering and possibly death! When the great religious organizations of the world merge because of the great destruction of the trumpets, whose rules will you follow?

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1 Matthew 7:17–18

2 Luke 11:42

3 Luke 11:46

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The tragedy of Satan’s deception is that he makes obedience of greater importance than the purpose of obedience! Jesus said of the Jews, **“They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules. You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”**<sup>1</sup>

On the other end of the scale, Satan has another counterfeit about salvation that is equally dangerous and perhaps more prevalent than the worker concept. This counterfeit maintains that if you believe you’re saved—you’re saved. This doctrine results in the conclusion that obedience to the Ten Commandments is unnecessary and, even more, an insult to God’s salvation. This Christian believes the fallacy that he is under grace, not under the law, and his primary duty is to love his neighbor as himself. One may have salvation, full and free, by simply asserting that Jesus died on Calvary.

I call these people *thinkers*. Thinkers tend to enjoy their religion more than workers because their religion is people-oriented. Thinkers are generous and casual about behavior, whereas workers are quite critical. The thinker’s gospel has very few limitations. Righteousness that comes with intellectual assent is simply a gift from God, so take it, and join the church. The heart of the thinker’s gospel is the golden rule, “Do unto your neighbor as you would have him do to you.”

The appeal of the thinker’s gospel lies in its perceived goodness, which contributes to its widespread popularity. The thinker’s gospel has transcended denominational boundaries and has become the dominant theme of contemporary Protestantism. We can observe this by examining whether theological differences among various denominations significantly influence the everyday lives of their members.

I have highlighted the distinct characteristics of thinkers and workers to illustrate the types of individuals shaped by these theological approaches. What we do reflects what we believe. Old Testament history reveals that Israel wavered between these two extremes. The reason Israel was so unstable is that it forgot that salvation comes through a love and faith relationship with God. It begins with loving Jesus for all that He has done. Then we must have faith in Jesus by doing, going, and being as He directs. This faith relationship requires daily prayer and study to know His will; meanwhile

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1 Mark 7:7–8

Satan offers countless diversions to keep us from spending time building our connection to Him.

Satan has cleverly counterfeited the gospel of the workers and thinkers by using *partial* truth in each case. Don't be fooled. Either doctrine is deadly. The simple truth about salvation is that salvation by faith means a complete surrender of our will to Jesus. It means to be, to do, and to go as Jesus directs your life. True salvation produces a life of action. Obedience is a result of salvation—not salvation through obedience. Hebrews 11 reveals that each of the great men and women in this Hall of Faith was obedient to God's commands! Paul says of Abraham, **“By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.”**<sup>1</sup>

The old gospel favorite by James Sammis and Daniel Towner, “Trust and Obey,” summarizes the gospel very well.

“When we walk with the Lord  
 In the light of His Word,  
 What a glory He sheds on our way!  
 While we do His good will,  
 He abides with us still,  
 And with all who will trust and obey.  
 “Trust and obey,  
 For there's no other way  
 To be happy in Jesus,  
 But to trust and obey.”

## 2. Counterfeit—Sanctuary in Heaven

We must understand that Jesus, our High Priest, is conducting a particularly important service in heaven today. Satan has obscured this wonderful truth. He has led most Christians to ignore the Old Testament sanctuary services by causing them to believe the ceremonies were only for the Jews. For this reason, they never investigate the sanctuary. Since the rituals and ceremonies attached to the earthly sanctuary are not part of Catholic/Prot-

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 11:17–19

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estant heritage, most Christians do not know why Paul wrote about the heavenly sanctuary in the book of Hebrews. Paul clearly says, “**The point of what we are saying is this: Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.**”<sup>1</sup> Since the sanctuary in the wilderness was a model of the sanctuary in heaven, shouldn’t we understand what the services meant? Since Jesus is our High Priest, shouldn’t we understand why we need one in the heavenly sanctuary?

Satan doesn’t want us to know about the sanctuary in heaven, for if we don’t know about the heavenly tabernacle, we won’t understand the importance of the *appointed time of the end*. If we don’t know about the appointed time of the end, we won’t be expecting the coming time of wrath that will occur when Jesus opens the fourth seal. Neither will we suspect the rapid and climactic culmination of earth’s events that occurs during the trumpets. If we don’t understand the Old Testament trumpets that warned of the approaching Day of Atonement, we won’t understand the purpose of Revelation’s trumpets. Even worse, Revelation’s story makes no sense apart from the work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. Satan has led Protestantism to believe that the Law of God and the law of Moses were nailed to the cross. By doing away with both laws, Protestants have forgotten the purpose of both.

### 3. Counterfeit—State of the Dead

The third foundational teaching that Satan has counterfeited is the reality of death. Satan has led most of Christendom to believe that when a person dies, he really doesn’t die. On the surface, this counterfeit may not seem too bad. If you have ever lost a loved one or close friend, there may be some consolation in the idea that they are better off in heaven. On the other hand, if you have lost an enemy, there also may be some consolation in the idea that he is worse off than before.

The issue of consolation does not address the important issues regarding the counterfeit understanding of what happens after death. Satan has caused many people to distrust God, even to the point of hatred, by leading them to believe in the doctrine of eternal torment. Satan has blinded many about

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1 Hebrews 8:1–2

God's loving character by misrepresenting His character to the human race. Remember, he deceived one-third of the angels too. Additionally, the idea that people go to heaven, or hell, immediately after death gives credibility to spiritism, psychic powers, and so-called *metaphysics*. Satan currently deceives many people through mysterious supernatural manifestations, but his best demonstrations are yet to come. He will create apparitions of deceased people to appear on earth! These apparitions will be demons in the form of human beings sent throughout the earth to deceive people into believing that Satan is God. John saw these apparitions and said, **"They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty."**<sup>1</sup>

Satan has strategically set the stage for his final deceptions. Since most people would rather depend upon their senses than trust their knowledge of the Word of God, they will be easy prey. When these demons appear, they will be an overpowering deception. If possible, the remnant could be deceived, too. When they come, these counterfeits will appear to be just as real as your own Mom or Dad. How can you argue that the dead know nothing when the form of a dead person stands *in the flesh* in front of you? The Bible is clear that the dead are dead. **"For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing."**<sup>2</sup> Jesus said that when He comes, **"All who are in their graves will hear his voice."**<sup>3</sup> You can anticipate that the Devil will use the lying testimony of many apparitions to disprove God's Word.

#### 4. Counterfeit—Second Coming of Jesus

The fourth deception of the gospel that Satan has given the Christian world is the truth about the second coming of Jesus. He has many Christians either believing that there is a *secret rapture* or that the second coming is in the distant future. Both of these counterfeit doctrines have the same effect. Most Christians are either unaware of the coming tribulation or they believe they will be spared the awful agony of the testing time that is soon coming to the whole world.

The secret rapture counterfeit holds two fatal flaws. First, this doctrine eliminates the urgent need to understand Revelation and the timely prepa-

1 Revelation 16:14

2 Ecclesiastes 9:5

3 John 5:28; See also 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17.

ration for events coming on the earth. Since many Christians believe a rapture occurs before the second coming, they are lulled into false security by thinking they have nothing to prepare for. Second, and even worse, is that when Satan comes, this group will likely receive him as *Christ* because the second coming hasn't occurred. When the trumpets begin, these people will be immediately overwhelmed, and in great panic, they will go along with the idea of appeasing God through legislative action.

In the other camp, many Christians scoff at the suggestion that the Lord is about to return. They see no reason for all the excitement. They say, "All things continue as usual—why all the fuss?" These people are content in their spiritual poverty. They have no idea of events coming on the earth, and even worse, they don't want to hear about it. They like spiritual programs that feature talented singers and gifted speakers with clever ideas. They don't want to hear about Jesus' coming wrath.

So, Satan has the Christian world convinced that they are either safe from the Great Tribulation, due to the rapture, or that life continues as usual—no worries. Unfortunately, his deceptions are widely accepted.

Those who receive the everlasting gospel are not focused on gloom or doom. They are focused on the greatest and most awesome event in earth's history: the revelation of Jesus at the second coming. They know that the testing time precedes the second coming, they know about the future rise of Babylon, and that Satan will appear claiming to be God. They know that their faith will be deeply tested—yet they are positive about their relationship with Jesus, and they have peace in their hearts, for they claim the promises of God. They are committed to being *overcomers* because they "have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to them." They walk by faith and they will be prepared for a mighty work when the trumpets sound.

### **5. Counterfeit—Sabbath Worship**

Satan has led most of the world to deny the importance of the seventh-day Sabbath. Friday is the day of worship for Muslims—25% of the world's population. About fifteen million Jews recognize Saturday as God's holy day, and Christians (all Christian faiths combined such as Catholics, Protestants, Greek Orthodox, Anglican)—30% of the world's population believe in the sacredness of Sunday. The remaining people in the world have no regard for the sacredness of any day of the week.

It should be very clear that worshiping on Saturday does not, nor can it ever, bring salvation. If an illegal alien sneaks into America and keeps all the laws, he does not become an American by obeying the laws. Rather, an alien becomes an American by submitting to the immigration process of becoming an American. Part of the process involves an oath stating that he will be loyal and obedient to the laws of America! Salvation, in a similar way, comes when we submit our lives to Jesus. This means we are willing to go, to be, and to do as He directs. The doing part of the process involves obedience to all Ten Commandments. Thus, the remnant are those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.

### **Christianity's Change—Saturday to Sunday**

The history of the change from Sabbath to Sunday worship by early Christians is important reading material for anyone wanting to understand the everlasting gospel. Since Christianity was born in the cradle of Judaism, Roman rulers did not see much difference between Christians and Jews. Consequently, Romans persecuted Christians just as they did the hated Jews. Even more, early Christians were soon forced to disassociate themselves from the Jews because the Jews persecuted them too.

When Rome destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, the Christian Church was dispersed. Christian theology was in its formative stages at this time and as Christians scattered all over the world, they took with them *partial knowledge* about the gospel. The Apostles wrote letters and journeyed to other lands over a period of 50 years to establish the Christian faith. However, it was inevitable that Christian leaders would arrive at different theological conclusions. Without the benefit of communication, Christians in Alexandria, Egypt developed doctrines that were different than Christians in Rome. As a result of time and distance, arguments broke out between Christians over various doctrines.

When Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he established the Christian faith there. Since Rome was the capital of the world, it was only natural that the new Christian Church in Rome should gain more power and influence with Roman leaders than other Christian churches that were geographically far away from the hub of civilization. It is also a well-known historical fact that Christians in Rome soon compromised their beliefs to avoid Caesar's fierce anger. Christians in remote areas, however, remained less affected.

After 300 years, Rome was the undisputed center of Christianity. Constantine became the first Christian emperor because he saw that Christianity offered an expedient way to unite the disintegrating Roman Empire, and he implemented the first Sunday laws in March, AD 321.

An early church writer, Socrates, tells us that Christians in Rome were *feasting* on Sunday, the weekly holiday of the Romans honoring the Sun god, by the fourth century while the rest of the Christian world still worshiped on Saturday. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History, Book V, Chap 22, Ante-Nicean Christian Library, Vol II*, (Boston, 1887), p. 132.

As time passed, the head officer of the Church of Rome, the pope strengthened in power. Eventually, he engineered the destruction of the Heruli, Ostrogoths, and Vandals. These three tribes, followers of Arius of Alexandria, believed that Christ was not eternal God, but a created being. When Rome finally destroyed the three tribes, the pope gained universal authority. Remember the three horns that were plucked up by their roots in Daniel 7.

### **Sunday Observance**

Early Christians in Rome did not understand the importance of God's Law. They adapted a philosophical approach to worship that reflected Roman practices to gain wider acceptance and increase the number of converts among the Romans. Thus, Sunday, the *holiday*, became Sunday, the *holyday*. So, Sunday worship became accepted throughout the Christian world without any biblical support. Neither history nor Roman Catholicism offers any scriptural support for Sunday worship or sacredness. The following statement, given at the Council of Trent, appropriately placed the authority for the change in the day of worship with the Roman Church, not with the Scriptures. The Council of Trent, Italy, was held from 1545 to 1563 to deal with outrageous charges by Protestants that the Church was disobeying the plain teachings of Scripture. On January 18, 1562, the Archbishop of Reggio made a speech in which he declared that tradition stood above Scripture: "The authority of the church could therefore not be bound to the authority of the Scripture because the Church had changed Sabbath into Sunday, not by the command of Christ, but by its own authority." (*Canon and Tradition*, Dr. J.H. Holtzman, p. 263.)

In the late 19th century, Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, author of the *Baptist Manual*, said: "There was and is a command to keep holy the Sabbath Day,

but that Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will be said however, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week, with all its duties, privileges, and sanctions.

“Earnestly desiring information on the subject, which I have studied for many years, I ask, where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament, absolutely not. There is no scriptural evidence of the change on the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week. I wish to say that this Sabbath question, in this aspect of it, is the gravest and most perplexing question connected with Christian institutions which at the present claims attention from Christian people; and the only reason that it is not a more disturbing element in Christian thought and in religious discussions, is because the Christian world has settled down content on the conviction that somehow a transference has taken place at the beginning of Christian history.” (A paper read before a New York Ministers Conference, Nov. 13, 1893).

US citizens have reaped a harvest of lawlessness by denying the requirements of God’s Ten Commandments. Most people will casually agree with the validity and importance of nine of the commandments. However, if anyone questions the validity of the fourth commandment, the typical Christian response will likely be that all Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross.

Obviously, the ceremonial laws were nailed to the cross when Jesus, the Passover Lamb, died. It is also true that civil laws which related to Israel’s legal economy in ancient times are not applicable today. However, many of the principles found in our civil laws today are taken from the Jewish civil laws of the Old Testament.

Israel received various types of laws from God.

- Moral (Ten Commandments)
- Ceremonial (pertaining to divine services)
- Civil (pertaining to the theocratic government)
- Health and Lifestyle

Satan has led Christians to erroneously combine these four groups of laws into one and then nail them to the cross! His cunning and sophistry are dangerously effective. By leading the human race to abandon health and

lifestyle laws, we see unrestricted use of injurious foods, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and more potent drugs. Some people say that the drug problem is America's greatest problem. But is it? Could our greatest problem be lawlessness?

We see homosexuality, transgenderism, and other gross sexual practices overwhelming our society. America has become polluted with every vile and imaginable sin because we have received counterfeit teachings from Satan. We have put our faith in the doctrines of the Devil!

The road to self-destruction doesn't end with the abandonment of health and lifestyle laws. Satan has gained control of this country by leading the US to abandon the great code of moral behavior. Our great printing presses roll out billions of evil magazines and the internet is full of pornographic sites offering the bodies of young men and women to those having an appetite for sexual immorality. Those who have an insatiable thirst for money and possessions have plenty to feed their appetite on in this form of idolatry. People interested in gossip and slander find food for their depraved souls in the supermarket checkout line or computer terminal—food suitable to their warped senses. Some interested in these awful pleasures have a hard time deciding what to read or watch, for there is more available than any perverted mind can possibly absorb. Satan has taken over US media, and he feeds US citizens with soul-destroying garbage.

The printing press was invented for the express purpose of printing the Bible, but look at the rubbish that is printed today. How ironic that radio, video, and internet development in America exceeds any other nation on earth and Satan has gained control of these too. These great and extensive powers promote evil on every venue by the minute. We may talk about environmental pollution, but it is far behind the pollution of our hearts and minds. The very airwaves have become polluted.

### **Satan has Almost Succeeded**

The Devil has counterfeited every truth in the gospel! This is why the trumpets must sound and the 144,000 appear. Jesus will gather His remnant through a proclamation of the gospel. Do you want to be part of the gospel movement?

The gospel is called *eternal* or, as in the King James Version, *everlasting* because it has always existed. It has not changed, for God has not changed.

What is changing is our understanding. We now see and understand more of God's holy Word—the Bible!

### **Your Turn**

Just as surely as knowledge has dramatically increased during the past century, our knowledge of the gospel has also increased. If you believe this book has treated the Scriptures fairly and if you see the reasonableness of the gospel message presented here, you need to perform three tasks.

- Completely dedicate (or rededicate) yourself to Jesus. This simply means that you are willing to be what He wants you to be, willing to do what He wants you to do, and willing to go wherever He sends you. This is what the life of faith is all about.
- Read this book again. You'll learn many more concepts that you may have missed.
- Last, find friends who are receptive to this material and share this message with them.

Your active support, influence, and dedication to the gospel will cause heaven's choir of billions of angels to rejoice. Jesus is waiting to deliver us from this planet. The angels are eager to come and retrieve us. Since we can only take our friends with us to heaven, let's win as many as we can. Come, be a part of the remnant while there is still mercy!

**“The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”<sup>1</sup>**

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1 Romans 13:11–12



# Jubilee Cycles Explain a Year for a Day

The ancient Jubilee Calendar is now beginning to unfold. Its purpose has been shrouded in mystery for centuries, but now we are beginning to understand its secrets. The Jubilee Calendar dates back to the days of the Exodus and God gave this timing mechanism to Moses for some very interesting reasons.

## A Rest for the Land

When the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, God had Joshua divide the land of Canaan into twelve *parcels*. God gave each tribe a parcel according to its size and gave the families within the tribe a tract of land. All families were free to use the land as they saw fit. They could even sell the land to fellow Hebrews in other tribes, but when the Year of Jubilee arrived, the land had to revert, at no charge, to the tribe and family who first received it. The exception to this rule was property within a walled city.<sup>1</sup>

Israel celebrated the Year of Jubilee at the end of each Jubilee cycle. Study the chart on the next page and you will see that each day of the week represents a year. You can download a color-coded Jubilee Calendar at our website *wake-up.org*. Notice that at the end of each week of years, the seventh year is a sabbatical year for the land. Understand that the sabbatical year *was not a sabbatical year for the people*, but for the land.<sup>2</sup>

After seven weeks of 49 years had ended, the Year of Jubilee began. You will notice that the 50<sup>th</sup>-year celebration occurs during the first year of the next cycle of 49 years (See 1388 BC). At first, this confuses many people. How can the 50th year of celebration also be the first year of the next cycle? The Jews marked off 49 days (seven weeks) from the Feast of Unleavened

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1 Joshua 14; Leviticus 25:10, 29

2 Leviticus 25:2–5

Bread to observe Pentecost. If Passover occurred on a seventh-day Sabbath, then seven Sabbaths and one day later, the 50th day, Israel celebrated the Day of Pentecost.<sup>1</sup> In this case, the 50th day, the day of Pentecost, is also the first day of the week. So, God's Jubilee Calendar is based on recurring cycles of seven weeks. Therefore, the 50th year from the old cycle of 49 years falls at the same time as the first year of the new cycle. Interestingly, this is the only way that the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 can equal 490 years.

### **The Jubilee Calendar is Not Man's Calendar**

God gave the Jubilee Calendar to Israel because He made Israel His timekeepers for humanity. They were the only people who received the perpetual responsibility of marking the passage of time as God sees time. God synchronized His eternal calendar on two occasions to prevent Israel from guessing at time. First, He told Moses *when* to start counting.<sup>2</sup> Then, for 40 years, He constantly verified the days of the week by doubling the amount of manna that fell on the sixth day and withholding manna on the seventh day of the week.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to synchronizing His people with His calendar, God required Israel to perpetually observe the seventh-day Sabbath to mark the passage of the weekly cycle. Through this weekly observance, God's people would always be distinguished from other nations. God declared that His seventh-day Sabbath would be a sign between Him and His people.<sup>4</sup> However, requiring Israel to maintain the weekly cycle was only part of God's larger purpose. He also required Israel to observe:

- The new moon to mark the passage of monthly cycles<sup>5</sup>
- The Passover on the 15th day of the new year to mark their yearly anniversary of deliverance
- Each seventh-year sabbatical to mark seven-year cycles within the Jubilee
- The Year of Jubilee to mark the completion of each 49-year cycle<sup>6</sup>

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1 Leviticus 23:15–16

2 Exodus 12:2

3 Exodus 16:26

4 Exodus 31:17

5 2 Chronicles 2:4

6 Leviticus 25:14–44

## Jubilee Not Observed Now

People are not observing the Jubilee cycles today, so they minimize the importance of these timing cycles. When Jesus died on Calvary, it was no longer necessary to observe the feast days and ceremonies,<sup>1</sup> but the time periods they marked still remain with us. As far as God is concerned, the weekly cycle, the monthly cycle, the yearly cycle, the week of years, and the Jubilee cycle are still intact. When Jesus died, the ceremonial services that occurred at these specific times became obsolete, but the cycles of time remain. In fact, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is directly connected to the 2,300 day/year prophecy using the day/year concept which originated in the Jubilee Calendar.

### A Starting Point

A day in the Jubilee Calendar represents a year. Verify this point by looking at the chart on the following page. The Jubilee Calendar marks the passage of time by counting *weeks of years*. That is, a week of seven days represents seven years. This may sound complicated, but remember, Israel did not have a fixed date by which to mark their calendars like we do today. When we say 2025, what year are we referring to? Many people believe that there were 2,025 years since Jesus was born (actually, a 2,025-year period from His birth is incorrect, but this is beside the point). Because our calendar dates from an event that all nations recognize, we can keep track of the years quite easily. But suppose the Japanese did not base their calendar on Jesus' birth, what model year Honda would they be selling in the US right now?

### The Weekly Cycle is a Template

God foreknew the problems of keeping track of time, so He created a calendar *based on the template* of the weekly cycle. Many people understand the importance of the cycle of the week, but few understand the importance of the other cycles.

### The Sabbatical

God declared that a sabbatical year *for the land* must occur every seventh year.<sup>2</sup> Every seventh year, Israel was not to plant or harvest crops from the land. In His divine wisdom, God accomplished two important goals with the seventh-year sabbatical. First, the land itself received a much-needed rest. Second and more importantly, He wanted to test Israel's faith every

1 Colossians 2:11–16; Galatians 4:9–11

2 Leviticus 25:3–7

# The First Two Jubilee Cycles

			Jubilee Cycle 1	Jubilee Cycle 2
Week of Years	Day	Yr	The Exodus	1 <sup>st</sup> /50 <sup>th</sup> Year
1 Sun	Sun	1	1437 BC	1388 BC
	Mon	2	1436	
	Tue	3	1435	
	Wed	4	1434	
	Thu	5	1433	
	Fri	6	1432	
	Sab	7	1431	1382
2 Mon	Sun	8		
	Mon	9		
	Tue	10		
	Wed	11		
	Thu	12		
	Fri	13		
	Sab	14	1424	1375
3 Tue	Sun	15		
	Mon	16		
	Tue	17		
	Wed	18		
	Thu	19		
	Fri	20		
	Sab	21	1417	1368
4 Wed	Sun	22		
	Mon	23		
	Tue	24		
	Wed	25		
	Thu	26		
	Fri	27		
	Sab	28	1410	1361

(Go to top of next column)

(Continued from Previous column)

			Jubilee Cycle 1	Jubilee Cycle 2
Week of Years	Day	Yr	The Exodus	1 <sup>st</sup> /50 <sup>th</sup> Year
5 Thu	Sun	29		
	Mon	30		
	Tue	31		
	Wed	32		
	Thu	33		
	Fri	34		
	Sab	35	1403	1354
4 Fri	Sun	36		
	Mon	37		
	Tue	38		
	Wed	39		
	Thu	40		
	Fri	41		
	Sab	42	1396	1347
7 Sab	Sun	43		
	Mon	44		
	Tue	45		
	Wed	46		
	Thu	47		
	Fri	48		
	Sab	49	1389	1340

**1 Jubilee Cycle  
= 7 Weeks of Years  
= 49 Years**

seventh year. He wanted to see if they would trust Him enough to provide for their needs. It would take considerable faith for an agricultural nation to let the land lay fallow for a whole year. So, God declared that years 7, 14, 21, 28, 35, 42, and 49 were perpetual Sabbatical years. The land was to receive its rest.

### The Year of Jubilee

The 49th year was the last sabbatical of a Jubilee cycle. Israel considered it a high year because it was the seventh sabbatical. Then, the high sabbatical of the 49th year was followed by the once-per-generation Year of Jubilee. Again, God's purpose for the Year of Jubilee was also a test of faith. God wanted His people to realize that the land they enjoyed was a gift from Him. He wanted them to know that they did not work for it, earn it, or deserve it. Therefore, they were to give the land back to its original owner every 50 years with the same cheerful spirit that He gave it to them because the land was not theirs to own. He wanted them to know that they were only stewards of the land. If they were faithful, they could remain on the land. If they were unfaithful to Him, He promised to throw them out.<sup>1</sup> He also required that they were not to plant or harvest their fields during the Year of Jubilee, for it was a holy year.<sup>2</sup>

### The Harmony of Time

When Israel observed the seventh-day Sabbath, they kept the weekly cycle intact. Their observance of new moons kept the monthly cycle intact. Their observance of the Passover kept the yearly cycle intact. Their observance of seventh-year sabbaticals kept the week of years intact. Finally, their observance of the Jubilee cycle was to return the land to its original owner and mark the passage of time.

In all but the first Jubilee *cycle* of 49 years beginning with the Exodus, there were eight sabbatical years per Jubilee cycle. These include the Year of Jubilee (year 1) in each subsequent cycle plus seven sabbaticals (remember—years 7, 14, 21, 28, 35, 42, 49). See the chart on the previous page.

### Warning for Sabbatical Violations

When God gave Israel the Jubilee Calendar, He made clear their responsibility. He warned, **“But if you will not listen to me and carry out all**

1 Joshua 24:13; Leviticus 18:24–28; 25:23; Jeremiah 2:7

2 Leviticus 25:11–12

these commands . . . then I will do this to you: I will bring on you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and sap your strength.”<sup>1</sup> “Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.”<sup>2</sup>

If we consider the penalty for violating the sabbatical years, we can understand their value in God’s sight. *Israel’s penalty for violating the sabbatical years was severe because God wanted Israel to live by faith. He also wanted Israel to perpetuate His calendar.* Since the Jubilee Calendar began at the time of the Exodus,<sup>3</sup> God intended that Israel would never forget their deliverance and their benevolent Creator. He required them to observe His sabbatical years. Anything God calls holy has an important lesson in it. He does not declare something holy to tempt man with disobedience.

### God’s Patience = 70 Units

God’s patience with Israel’s backsliding is beyond human understanding. For centuries, He tried to get Israel to shape up and accomplish all that He had in mind, but they refused. Eventually, Israel filled their cup of iniquity. God’s patience expired when Israel violated a total of 70 sabbatical years.

When Israel’s number of sabbatical violations reached 70, God expelled them from Jerusalem and had King Nebuchadnezzar haul them off to Babylon. They had to remain in Babylon for 70 years because the land had gone without 70 sabbaticals of rest. Remember God’s warning. **“All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.”**<sup>4</sup> God’s patience with Israel reached its limit with 70 years of sabbatical violations, and He had them evicted from the land. Notice what the Bible says about their captivity, **“The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah.”**<sup>5</sup>

1 Leviticus 26:14–16

2 Leviticus 26:33–35

3 Exodus 12:2

4 Leviticus 26:35

5 2 Chronicles 36:21

**How are 70 Sabbaticals Counted?**

Ezekiel demonstrated through his symbolic actions how God decreed a 70-year period of punishment for Israel for its 70 sabbatical-year violations. **“Now, son of man, take a block of clay, put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it. Then lay siege to it.”<sup>1</sup> “You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side. I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the people of Israel. After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the people of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year.”<sup>2</sup>**

This is how the math works. If we add the 390 years of Israel’s sin to the 40 years of Judah’s sin, we obtain a sum of 430 years of sinful sabbatical violations. This is why Ezekiel had to lay on his right and left sides for a total of 430 days—a day for each year. In 430 years, there are eight Jubilee cycles plus a partial cycle (the 9th) which contains 38 years. So, 430 years contain exactly 70 sabbaticals! (Remember that there are 8 sabbaticals in a Jubilee cycle of 49 years.) Here’s how the total of 70 sabbaticals is found:

Jubilee Cycle	Years	Sabbaticals
1	49	8
2	49	8
3	49	8
4	49	8
5	49	8
6	49	8
7	49	8
8	49	8
9	38	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>70</b>

1 Ezekiel 4:1–2  
 2 Ezekiel 4:1–6

Let's take a closer look at how the sabbatical years are calculated in the ninth Jubilee Cycle on the previous chart. The bolded years in the following chart are the remaining six sabbatical years to total the 70 sabbatical violations.

Weeks of Years	Sunday Year	Monday Year	Tuesday Year	Wednesday Year	Thursday Year	Friday Year	Sabbath Year
1	<b>1*</b>	2	3	4	5	6	<b>7</b>
2	8	9	10	11	12	13	<b>14</b>
3	15	16	17	18	19	20	<b>21</b>
4	22	23	24	25	26	27	<b>28</b>
5	29	30	31	32	33	34	<b>35</b>
6	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
7	43	44	45	46	47	48	49

\*Year 1 is the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the previous 49-year Jubilee cycle.

### The Bible is Nearly Silent

The silence regarding sabbatical or Jubilee celebrations in the Bible leads me to conclude that Israel didn't often measure up to God's ideal. In fact, only one Year of Jubilee was mentioned in the Bible.<sup>1</sup> In these texts, we learn that the 49th sabbatical year and the Year of Jubilee occurred during the 14th and 15th years of Hezekiah's reign<sup>2</sup> which could have fallen on 703/702 BC. This point will become important when we try to identify the year of origin for the Jubilee cycle.

### Another Day/Year Calculation

While in Babylonian captivity, God spoke to the prophet Daniel and told him that He was going to give Israel another chance. This opportunity would also have a limit of 70 units. However, instead of granting Israel 70 sabbaticals of time, God used the next larger unit within the calendar. He granted Israel 70 sevens (70 weeks of years).<sup>3</sup> This should have been enough time for Israel to become the nation that God wanted. Note the progression within the Jubilee Calendar. God moved from 70 sabbaticals of patience to

1 Isaiah 37:30; 2 Kings 19:29

2 2 Kings 18:13; Isaiah 36:1

3 Daniel 9:24

70 weeks of patience. Seventy weeks in the Jubilee Calendar contain 490 literal years and 490 literal years equals 10 Jubilee cycles.

According to Daniel 9, the 70 weeks were to begin with the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. In the spring of 457 BC, Artaxerxes, the world monarch of the Persian Empire, issued a decree granting the Jews complete sovereignty as a nation. He issued this decree on or about the 1st day of the 1st month<sup>1</sup> because Nehemiah and company left for Jerusalem on the 12th day of the 1st month.<sup>2</sup> Ezra carried the decree to the Jews in Jerusalem. The group arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month (late July, the month of Ab), and Ezra read the declaration of the Jews after resting for three days.<sup>3</sup> Two items appear highly symbolic about the timing of these events. First, the decree was issued in the spring, *right on time*, because God's calendar of weeks runs from spring to spring.<sup>4</sup> So, the timing of the issuance of the decree complies with the beginning of a new week in God's calendar of weeks. Second, 457 BC is a Jubilee year. The significance of the timing is that God returned the land to the Jews in His Jubilee year by moving on the heart of Artaxerxes. I think these are matters of consequence, especially after reading Ezra 1:1.<sup>5</sup>

When AD 33 arrived, the 70 weeks had expired, and the Jews had not progressed as God desired. Israel had greatly rebelled against the Holy One of Israel. So, in AD 70, God sent the Romans to Jerusalem, and they destroyed it again.

### **7 x 10 = 70**

Have you noticed that God's patience may be measured in units of 70? When Israel violated 70 sabbaticals, God had them removed from the land by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar so that the land could receive its rest. When Israel violated the 70 weeks, God had Jerusalem destroyed by Rome's army in AD 70. Again, the land received its rest.

If you are a student of the Old Testament, you know that judgment day, the most important day of the sanctuary service, was the Day of Atonement.

1 Ezra 7:9

2 Ezra 8:31

3 Ezra 8:36

4 Exodus 12:1–3

5 Chapter 8 about God's clocks includes an explanation of the 70 weeks and how Jesus appeared to confirm the synchronisms of the weeks of years.

It occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month. The month and day of this service combine to form 70. It may be that seven represents the fullness of God's patience and ten represents the limit of His mercy. It seems that 70 units indicate a time for judgment. You may have already considered the possibility that the total existence of sin will be 7,000 years, which just happens to be 70 centuries. The length of life itself is often called threescore and ten which, of course, is 70 years.<sup>1</sup> Are these instances of 70 units coincidental? I'm not saying that numerology (the study of numbers) is a dependable key; however, these considerations should cause us to be alert.

### Kindness Has a Limit

The first reference to 70 sevens is found in Genesis 4:24, but the finest explanation is in the New Testament. **“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’**

**“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’”**<sup>2</sup> The NIV and other translations of this verse say 77 times. Actually, Jesus did not say 77 times. Rather, He turned to Peter and said *seventy sevens*. Peter immediately understood the phrase. Just as God had forgiven Israel and granted *seventy sevens* (490 years) of redemptive opportunity, Peter was to forgive his brother and grant him the same redemptive grace.

### Prophetic Periods

It is beyond the scope of this appendix to examine all the prophetic periods in the Bible. However: *All apocalyptic time periods occurring within the operation of Jubilee cycles are to be interpreted in Jubilee units of time. Under this system, a day represents a literal year.* This also means that prophetic time periods outside of Jubilee cycles are to be interpreted as literal units of time. This concept becomes very interesting when we consider the possibility that there may be a finite number of Jubilee cycles. That number could be 70.

Notice how the Jubilee principle works with respect to prophetic time periods. Before God established Jubilee cycles, prophetic time periods were literal. Therefore, Noah's 120 years of warning<sup>3</sup> were 120 literal years because

1 Psalm 90:10

2 Matthew 18:21–22

3 Genesis 6:3

they happened *before* Jubilee cycles began. The 1,260 days of Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 12:6, 14 are to be interpreted using Jubilee units. Therefore, they represent 1,260 years. The 1,000 years of the seventh millennium will be literal years because they occur *after* the expiration of Jubilee cycles.

Some Bible students may ask why the 70 years prophesied by Jeremiah were literal since they occurred during Jubilee cycles. Israel's 70 years of Babylonian captivity were payment-in-kind for violating 70 seventh-day sabbaticals. So, Israel spent a year in captivity for each seventh-day sabbatical violation. The seventy years of captivity is a repetition and enlargement of the day/year principle that went into effect at the time of the Exodus. For example, Israel served a year for each *day* the spies were in the Promised Land.<sup>1</sup> Then, God went to the next level of magnitude. Israel served 70 literal years in Babylon for violating 70 sabbatical *years*.

### The Week of Millenniums

Suppose there is a week of millenniums; that is, each day of creation stands for a period of 1,000 years. Suppose that the millennium of Revelation 20 is not a random number, but the seventh millennium or sabbatical millennium for earth. Perhaps the whole earth receives its rest for 1,000 years because the wicked are dead and the saints are in heaven. If we accept that Jesus' second coming is on or about the 6,000th year, this simple concept could clarify several problems regarding time periods in Daniel and Revelation.

A most interesting possibility develops. Assume there are 70 Jubilees of time. The 70th Year of Jubilee would be 1994. Since 1994, four angels have been holding back the winds of the earth to prevent the judgments of the first four trumpets from occurring until the 144,000 are sealed.<sup>2</sup> After the global earthquake occurs,<sup>3</sup> the 1,335 literal days of Daniel 11 and the Great Tribulation begin. The countdown for Jesus' second coming at the 6,000th year of the millennial week has arrived!

The most important point is that after the Jubilee expires, prophetic time becomes literal. This simple mechanism explains why some time periods are a day for a year and others are literal days or years.

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1 Numbers 14:34

2 Revelation 7:1

3 Revelation 8:5

### God Reckons Jubilees After AD 33

Two prophecies confirm the perpetuity of Jubilee cycles long after the demise of ancient Israel in AD 70. The first prophecy is found in Daniel 7:25 which foretells that the little horn power would persecute the saints of God for a time, times, and half a time. This period of 1,260 days interpreted as years began in AD 538 and ended in 1798. History confirms the duration of this period, so it verifies the presence and operation of the day/year principle. In addition, the fulfillment of this 1,260-year prophecy confirms the continued operation of the Jubilee Calendar, for without this calendar, there is no hermeneutical reason to apply the day/year mechanism to this verse. In other words, the operation of the Jubilee Calendar is confirmed by historical events.

Some people may argue that in symbolic prophecy, a day *always* equals a year. This rule cannot be true. Daniel 4:16 states that seven times are sentenced on King Nebuchadnezzar who is *symbolized* as a tree in this prophecy. Furthermore, the Hebrew word *'iddan* in Daniel 4:16 is identical to Daniel 7:25 and Daniel 12:7. The word is translated as *time*. I believe it refers to the geometric equivalent of one revolution of the sun around earth, much like Native Americans use *one moon* to represent one month. One revolution (or circle) mathematically contains 360 degrees. Thus, a time equals one year of 360 mathematical days—not actual days. I am unaware of any ancient calendar having a 360-day solar cycle.

As far as I know, only Jehovah's Witnesses consistently apply the day/year principle to Daniel 4:16, Daniel 7:25, and Daniel 12:7. We must have a principle or method of calculation to determine when time is literal and when time is a day for a year. I believe the answer is quite simple. If the time period is part of apocalyptic prophecy *and* it occurs during the operation of the Jubilee Calendar, the time period must be interpreted as Jubilee units, or a day for a year.

The second prophecy that confirms the perpetuity of the Jubilee cycle long after the demise of ancient Israel is found in Daniel 8:14. Whatever question may have existed about the use of day/year within the Jubilee Calendar is eliminated when this prophecy was fulfilled. This is because this prophecy began in 457 BC and reached down to AD 1844. Here, we must recognize two impressive points. First, the day/year principle is clearly at work because the time (70 sevens = 490 literal years = 10 Jubilee cycles) granted to Israel was *cut off* from this larger prophecy. (Hebrew: *chathak*

means to snip off from a larger piece) In other words, if the 70 sevens are reckoned in Jubilee units of weeks, then the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 must also be reckoned in Jubilee units of day/year because the 70 sevens are cut off from the 2,300 days. Second, and maybe even more importantly, this prophecy reveals that Jesus himself, the one who created the prophecy, connected His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary to the timing mechanism established by Jubilee cycles. If Jesus reckons the operation of the Jubilee Calendar to be important, shouldn't we?

### **Date of the Exodus**

Often the first question people have about the Jubilee chart is its beginning date. Scholars have debated the date of the Exodus from Egypt for centuries and considerable diversity of opinion exists. So, can we identify the date of the Exodus?

First, no one has proven with absolute certainty the date of the Exodus. And neither have I. Given the lack of solid evidence, most scholars will grant a small variance to whatever date they settle on. For this reason, 1437 BC is not an extraordinary date, but it is a *calculated* date using well-respected events whose dating has been verified outside the Bible.

Second, 1437 BC is not only historically plausible, it is the *only* date that compliments the weekly cycle of years without insurmountable difficulty. If you can tolerate the idea that the Jubilee cycle serves a greater purpose than marking the passage of time, you will have a new appreciation for God's intricate workings and plans.

### **Ultimate Purpose**

The Jubilee Calendar offers a simple solution to the problem of which prophecies are interpreted as a day for a year and which are not. The calendar operates like this: If a prophetic time period falls within the time period of 70 Jubilees and that prophecy belongs to the family of 17 apocalyptic prophecies found in Daniel and Revelation, it must be interpreted by the day for a year principle. After the Jubilee Calendar expires, all prophetic time periods must be interpreted as literal time. Thus the 1,000 years of the millennium are literal years and not a 1,000-year interpretation of day for a year (1,000,000 years).

We can show that all time periods in Daniel and Revelation will harmoniously fit together if Jubilee units are applied to those time periods that fall within the Jubilee Calendar rule. Further, the literal units of time mentioned

in Daniel and Revelation complement the expiration of the Jubilee Calendar so that the 6,000 years of the millennial week is reasonably demonstrated.

### Determining 1437 BC

The calculation of 1437 BC is not complicated. Basically, the process requires assembling known dates with one uncertain time period. After placing them on a timeline, we then impose the Jubilee scheme upon them. For the sake of brevity, assume the spring of 1437 BC is a possible starting date. It is a Sunday year and it is the first year in a Jubilee cycle if you accept the dating of the 70th week to be AD 27–33.

Some Bible students argue that Israel did not observe Jubilee cycles until after they entered Canaan. I don't think this was God's plan for three reasons. First, He gave the calendar to Moses on Mount Sinai.<sup>1</sup> I believe Mount Sinai occurred about 18 months after the Exodus. Second, about six months after Mount Sinai, Israel sent the spies into Canaan. Then, God applied the day/year principle which had just been revealed. I believe that the day/year principle is only found under the operation of the Jubilee Calendar. Last, when God began counting the 40-year wilderness sentence, He began counting from the Exodus, not the return of the spies from Canaan. Total time in the wilderness was 40 years. This shows that God reckoned time, specifically, the operation of a day for a year interpretation, which demonstrates the presence of the Jubilee Calendar from the Exodus. But most important of all, if the Exodus does not mark the beginning of the Jubilee Calendar, then the weekly cycle of years cannot be determined.

The mathematical process for calculation is as follows:

- 1 Kings 6:1 says that the temple of Solomon was begun during the 480th year after the Exodus. So,  $1437 - 480 = 957$  BC.
- 457 BC marks the beginning of the 70 weeks. It also confirms the synchronism of the day for a year process within the Jubilee Calendar. Thus, 457 BC must be a Sunday year. Total time between 957 BC and 457 BC = 500 years.
- A Jubilee year occurred during the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign.<sup>2</sup> This can easily be demonstrated to occur during 702 BC. Total time between 957 BC and 702 BC = 255 years.

<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 26:46

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 36:1; 37:30

- Between Solomon's (957 BC) and Hezekiah's reigns (702 BC), 13 kings ruled in Judah over a period of 256 years inclusively if one allows for coregent reigns. According to the Bible, the total number of years that all kings ruled was about 304. However, this count includes several coregent reigns. A coregent reign is when a new king begins to rule while the old king is still ruling. This common practice ensured a stable transition from one king to another.
- The seventy years of captivity in Babylon have been confirmed outside of the Bible as 605 BC to 538 BC. Also, the third destruction of Jerusalem<sup>1</sup> during Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year has been confirmed as August, 586 BC from sources outside the Bible. Israel was taken captive in a 49th year, so the land began to enjoy its Sabbath rest as a new Jubilee cycle began in 604 BC.
- The beginning of the 70 weeks found in Daniel 9 occurred in 457 BC during the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes. This means that the 70th week of years occurred between AD 27 (the Sunday year) and AD 33 (the Sabbath year). Jesus himself confirmed the timing of this prophecy by appearing and dying in the middle of the week, AD 30.<sup>2</sup> Jesus' ministry and death confirm the synchronism of the Jubilee Calendar.
- The 70 weeks predicted in Daniel 9 are synchronous with the weeks of the existing Jubilee Calendar from which they are taken. In fact, Artaxerxes' decree in 457 BC is the only one of four decrees occurring at the beginning of a Jubilee cycle regarding the return of Israel. Given the purpose of the Jubilee year and the condition of Israel at the time, this is particularly significant. Thus, the 70 weeks of years (490 years) are synchronous with the Jubilee cycles that were already operating at the time.
- The 1,260-day period interpreted as a day for a year (1,260 years) of persecution found in Daniel 7:25 ended in February 1798, when Berthier captured the pope and sent him into exile as a prisoner. The time allotted for this persecution began in AD 538 and ended in 1798. This specific period is mentioned two more times in the

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1 Compare 2 Kings 25:8–9 with Jeremiah 52:5; 32:1–2.

2 Galatians 4:4; Daniel 9:27

Bible: Revelation 12:6 and 12:14. Because this time period is not connected to the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9 and it begins five centuries after the fall of Jerusalem, its historical fulfillment demonstrates the continued operation of the Jubilee Calendar. February 1798 marks the end of a Jubilee year because the Jubilee Calendar begins in March/April. 1798 was to Protestants what AD 34 was to Christians: a Jubilee year!

### The Larger Plan

Consider the years 1437, 457, 34, 1798, and 1994. All of these dates are the first year of 49-year Jubilee cycles. Is it just a coincidence that each of these five dates marks the beginning of a new trusteeship of God's truth? When God called Israel out of the bondage of Egypt in 1437 BC, He made them trustees of His everlasting gospel. They were to be a light on a hill, the salt of the earth, BUT, they failed. God then turned to Christians. In AD 34, the trusteeship of the everlasting gospel was transferred, and God marked the transition by converting Saul, the Pharisee, to Paul the apostle to the Gentiles,<sup>1</sup> and by sending Peter to the home of a Gentile.<sup>2</sup> *These events happened in the Jubilee year of AD 34.*

After a while, the Christians repeated the same mistakes as their Jewish forefathers. The persecuted became the persecutor. In February 1798, according to divine decree,<sup>3</sup> the rule of the Catholic Church was broken when General Berthier took the pope captive. *This happened in the Jubilee year of 1798.* From this time, Protestantism has had unrestricted freedom to accomplish the task of carrying the everlasting gospel to all the world.

Unfortunately, the Protestants have lost their mission and purpose. They have fallen away from the truths of the everlasting gospel just as their forefathers did and their trusteeship is about to be taken from them and given to the final generation.

If we add up the trusteeships in units of Jubilee cycles, we find an interesting balance. The Jews received 30 Jubilee cycles of opportunity. Christians received 36 Jubilee cycles of opportunity. Protestants, I believe, have received four Jubilee cycles of opportunity and finally, the 144,000

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1 Acts 9

2 Acts 10

3 Daniel 7:25

will achieve in a mere 1,260 days what the others failed to do. Could this be a Gideon-like miracle?

### **The \$64,000 Question**

When all the data is added, we are still left with some uncertainty because the length of the coregent reign of kings cannot be firmly established. Additionally, we do not know how long the four angels will hold back the judgments that are soon to come on the earth.

Many scholars have painstakingly reviewed the biblical list of 40 kings in Judah and Israel, ending with Zedekiah; they have also considered the known reigns of contemporary kings in Babylon, Egypt, and Assyria. They generally concur that the Exodus had to fall within the window of 1470 – 1430 BC. So, the 1437 BC date easily falls within many dating schemes for the Exodus. However, only 1437 BC complements the synchronous operation of the weekly cycles of seven years with important dates like 604 and 457 BC. If we accept the presence and operation of the Jubilee Calendar, we have a simple but profound explanation for why some prophecies use the day/year mechanism and others do not. This little key opens a new world of discovery about the literal timing of end-time events.

### **Summary**

It is impossible to prove that 1437 BC is the date of the Exodus, and this remains in the category of *plausible* historical interpretations. Just as the past holds uncertainties, the future is even more unpredictable. No one can prove something that has not happened. We cannot prove events that have yet to occur, but God provides us with substantial evidence to build our faith. This gives us a wonderful opportunity to study prophecies and discern their relevance to our lives today. Despite all that has been written, one truth remains clear: immorality and sin are rampant in our world. Much like in the days of Noah, few recognize the significance of the events unfolding around us. God has entrusted us with the mission to share our understanding before the door of salvation closes. Let us remain vigilant, watching, and waiting!

# Quick Reference Data

## Apocalyptic Rules of Interpretation

1. Each apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning and ending point in time, and the events within each prophecy occur in the order they are given. (Timing)
2. A prophecy or prophetic element is not fulfilled until all the specifications of the prophecy are met—including the order of the events given within the prophecy. (Fulfillment)
3. Apocalyptic language can be literal, symbolic, or analogous. A prophecy student must consider the context, the use of parallel language in the Bible, and for symbolic language, a relevant text that defines the symbol to reach the intended meaning of a passage. (Language)
4. The presence or absence of the Jubilee Calendar determines how God measures time. If a prophetic time period occurs during the Jubilee Calendar (1437 BC – AD 1994), a prophetic day for a year applies; otherwise, the prophetic days are literal days. (Timing)

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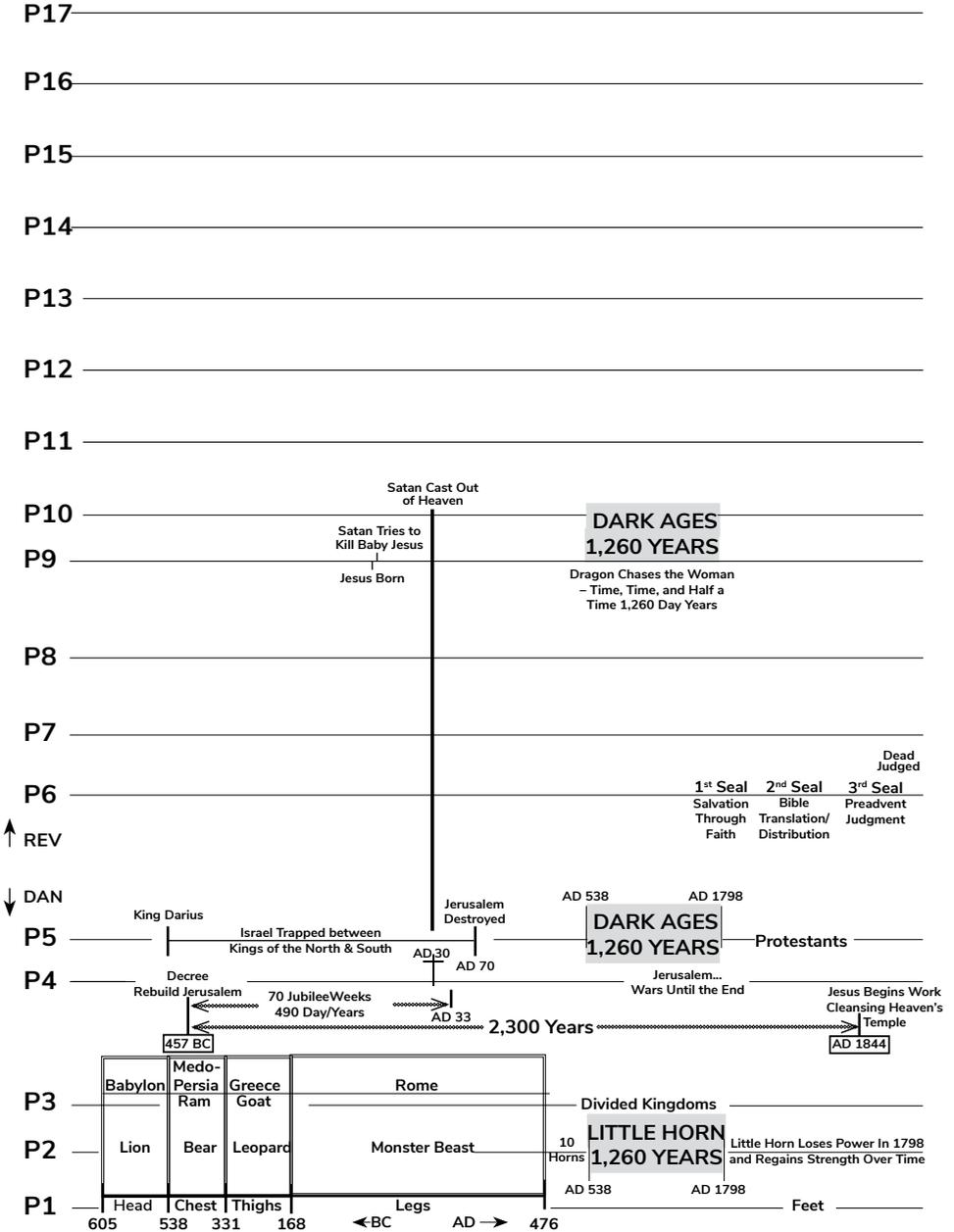
# Quick Reference Data

## The 17 Apocalyptic Prophecies

For the placement of the elements within each prophecy, see the apocalyptic chart on the next page.

1. Daniel 2:29–35 – The Metal Man (P1)
2. Daniel 7:1–12 – The Little Horn Power (P2)
3. Daniel 8:1–12 – The Antichrist (P3)
4. Daniel 9:20–27 – The Seventy Weeks (P4)
5. Daniel 10:1–12:13 – Wars Between the North & South (P5)
6. Rev 4:1–6:17 – The Six Seals (P6)
7. Rev 7:1–8:1 – The 144,000 (P7)
8. Rev 8:2–9:21 – The Six Trumpets (P8)
9. Rev 10:1–11:19 – The Two Witnesses (P9)
10. Rev 12:1–6 – The Baby Jesus (P10)
11. Rev 12:7–14:5 – The Rise of Babylon (P11)
12. Rev 14:6–15:6 – The Eternal Gospel (P12)
13. Rev 15:7–16:21 – The Seven Bowls (P13)  
Rev 17 – The Angel's First Visit
14. Rev 18:1–19:10 – The Second Coming (P14)
15. Rev 19:11–20:10 – The Day of the Lord (P15)
16. Rev 20:11–21:1 – The Earth Purified (P16)
17. Rev 21:2–8 – The New Heaven & New Earth (P17)  
Rev 21:9–22:21 – The Angel's Second Visit

# Apocalyptic Chart





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