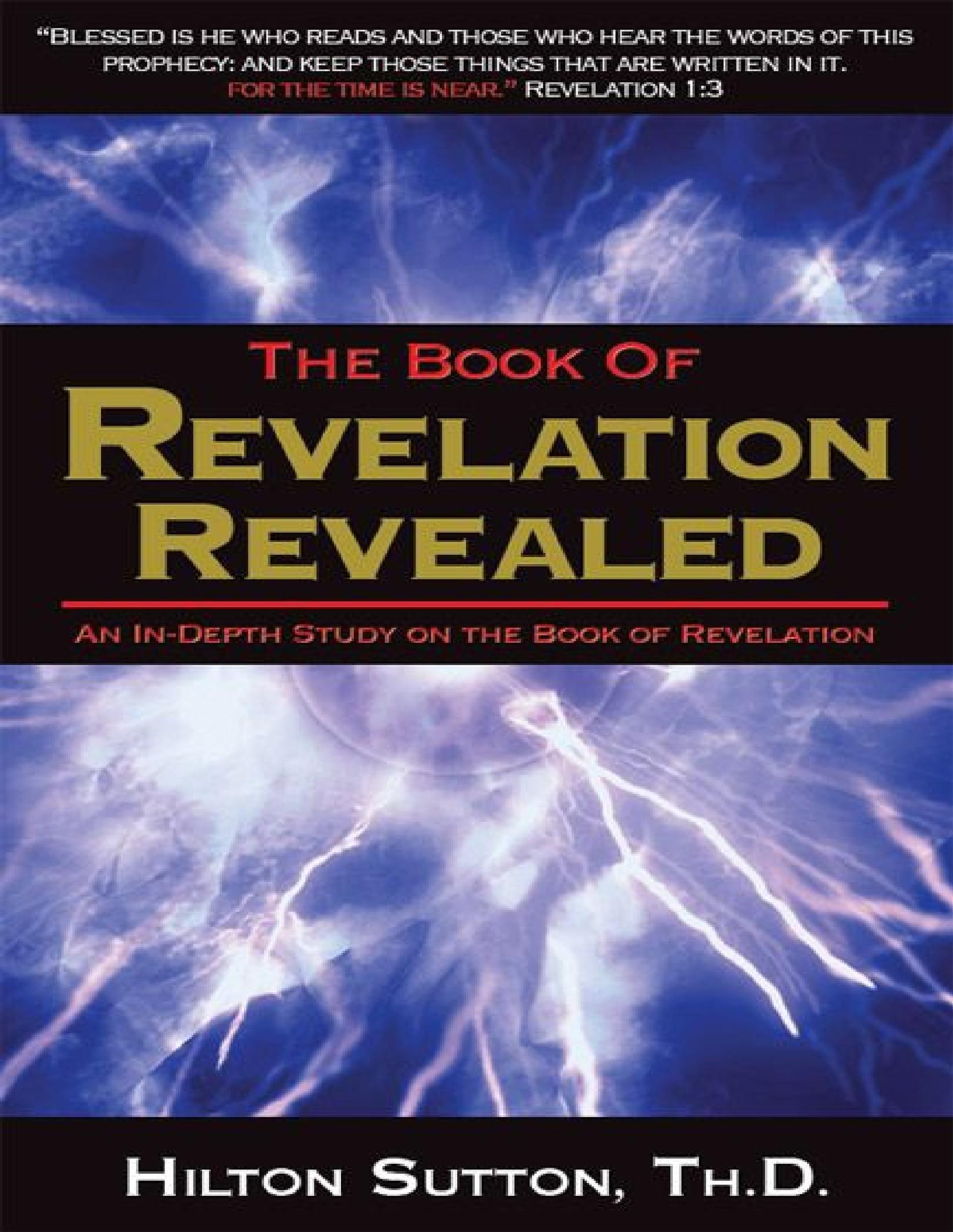


"BLESSED IS HE WHO READS AND THOSE WHO HEAR THE WORDS OF THIS PROPHECY: AND KEEP THOSE THINGS THAT ARE WRITTEN IN IT. FOR THE TIME IS NEAR." REVELATION 1:3



THE BOOK OF  
**REVELATION**  
**REVEALED**

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AN IN-DEPTH STUDY ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

HILTON SUTTON, TH.D.

# **The Book of Revelation Revealed**



# **An In-Depth Study on the Book of Revelation**

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The cover depicts Revelation 4:5.

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# **The Book of Revelation Revealed**



**An In-Depth Study  
on the Book of Revelation**



***God's End-Time Love  
Letter to Mankind***

*by*

*Hilton Sutton, Th.D., D.Min., D.D.*

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# Dedication



For the believing Church.

My thanks to God the Father, the Holy Spirit and our Lord Jesus for Their supernatural help. Also, I thank my family for their patience during the years of preparation and my staff for the help they afforded me.

To God be the glory!

# WARNING

**THIS BOOK WILL CHANGE EVERYTHING:  
YOUR THEOLOGY, DOCTRINE, THOUGHT PROCESS AND  
DAILY LIFE!**

You will be set free! Jesus said, “*The truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32).

Free from all the confusion Satan has sown in the Christian family about this book. Free from all the doom and gloom associated with this book often taught by misinformed or improperly taught ministers. Free from fear of the future!

This is the book Satan has, for centuries, opposed. God, our Father, is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). Neither has He given us the spirit of fear (II Tim. 1:7). Therefore, all the confusion and fear within the Church is the work of Satan.

The book of Revelation is about Jesus; so states the very first verse. This verse along with Revelation 1:11 and 22:16 establish God’s plan and will.  
**This book must be taught in all the churches!**

Revelation 1:3 states, “*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy.*”

How then could it be a horror story? As a Bible believer, I must ask you, how long are you going to carry the baggage of confusion and fear Satan has sown against this book? His fear and confusion is robbing you of the truth and freedom.

One may reason, “I do not need the book of Revelation to know the truth.”

Such a statement only reflects deception. The apostle Paul writes, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*” (II Tim. 3:16-17).

I rest my case. Without the book of Revelation neither you nor I can ever be complete and properly equipped. Selah!

# Preface



Present world affairs clearly demonstrate that the ancient prophecies of the Holy Scriptures are rapidly coming to pass. Prophecies pertaining to the restoration of Israel set the stage for the return of Samaria, Judea and Jerusalem to Israel. This fulfillment occurred during the Six-Day War of 1967.

These same prophetic fulfillments have brought us closer to prophetic events found within the book of Revelation. I hasten to point out that the future prophecies within this book are not yet being fulfilled.

Daniel writes about the “*time of end*” in chapter 12. This term time of the end identifies the closing of the vast period known as “the last days.” From the prophecies of Joel 2:28-31, confirmed by Acts 2:16-20, we know the “upper room” experience was indeed a last-days event. Also, the ministry of Jesus took place during the last days (Heb. 1:1-2). Therefore, we are nearing the completion of 2,000 years of last days. The seven years identified as “the Tribulation” are also part of the last days. Prophecies, beginning in Revelation 6 with the opening of the first seal by Jesus, get the Tribulation underway.

However, do not overlook or pay only light attention to the first five chapters. They are vitally important to one’s understanding of this exciting, dramatic and thrilling book.

Chapter 1 is the chapter of introduction. Pay close attention. Chapters 2 and 3 hold extremely important messages to today’s Church. The “catching up” of the righteous Church (the Rapture) is described by John at the beginning of chapter 4; while the remainder of the chapter, plus chapter 5, reveals personalities, groups and events before the throne of God. These

chapters clearly establish the presence of the Body of Christ, the Church, in heaven before the beginning of the Tribulation.

One must conclude that the present fulfillment of prophecies is taking us closer by the day to the catching up of the righteous Church. Remember, the same prophecies which announce the time for the Antichrist and the Tribulation also hasten the day of the glorious appearing of Jesus for the purpose of receiving a glorious Church unto Himself (I Thess. 4:16-18; Eph. 5:27).

The book of Revelation is the greatest book in the Bible because it contains God's grand conclusion. The utter defeat of Satan's best plan is beautifully described within this glorious book.

Do not allow Satan to keep you from studying this book. It is the one book of the Bible he hates most. He works overtime to keep God's people in ignorance of this important book. Realize confusion concerning this majestic book has been brought about by Satan. God is not the author of confusion.

It is time *you* understood and are blessed by the content of the book of Revelation.

# Introduction



The most dramatic, exciting and important book of the Bible is also the most feared, misquoted and declared “confusing.” Of course, *Revelation* is the title of that book.

No one questions the drama and excitement of this magnificent volume, but they may question that it is the most important book in the Bible. Why so?

As you know from experience, no author places his grand finale or climax at any place in his book except the last chapter. Were an author to do otherwise, few would finish reading his book. Anything written after the grand finale or climax would be anticlimactic, downhill and of little interest.

God, being perfect and the greatest Author of all, got it right the first time. He places the grand finale of His Word in the last book of the Bible: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*.

Since this is an absolute, it elevates the book of Revelation to a very important position. You will discover that it brings together many great truths of the Bible. It fills in the missing pieces and harmonizes various biblical teachings. It is indeed the *Grand Finale of God’s Word*.

How delighted and happy I became when I discovered Jesus was the one in control of all the events revealed in this book, and that reading the book of Revelation brings blessings, according to chapter 1, verse 3. As you study, you will understand this statement; and it is absolutely important that you do.

I am grateful to the Holy Spirit for His help in enabling me to properly and positively present this glorious Revelation. God the Father gets all the

glory and I remain just one of His many servants. I am extremely blessed that He has chosen me for this assignment.

Approach this book with an open heart, inviting the Holy Spirit to illuminate your understanding and let the blessings flow.

# *Part I*



# **Keys to Understanding Revelation**

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– CHAPTER 1 –

# Why Study Revelation?



You never put down a book without reading the last chapter or leave a play as the closing act is about to begin.

Revelation is the final book of the sixty-six volumes which compose the Bible. It is the last chapter of the most exciting, provocative book you could ever read; the closing act of the play of plays, the grand finale of a master performance. As a whole, the Church has “walked out” on it.

Through one of His angels, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself gave Revelation to the apostle John.

## THE TIME IS AT HAND

Revelation was important to the Church in early Bible days, and it is just as important to us today. Revelation 1:3 ends with, “*for the time is near*” [“*at hand*” KJV]. After John received Revelation, he sent it to the churches in Asia so that it might be distributed among the saints and passed down to us.

**It is imperative for every believer to understand the book of Revelation.** It was not designed to confuse the saints. However, they need to give their attention to its explanation. Today as God opens His servants’ minds to the full understanding of the vision first given to John, there is a growing interest in it. God is using several persons to teach this message. No one man can claim credit for what the Holy Spirit is doing.

You may have heard renowned theologians and teachers disagree over Revelation’s true interpretation. Some of them say it is not significant today

because its prophecies have already been fulfilled. Others say it is not to be understood until some later date. Still others say it reveals a terrible future and should be left alone.

Often, people comment simply that they cannot begin to grasp its meaning. They say, “If most great scholars and godly men do not understand Revelation, certainly I never will,” or “I do not need to understand Revelation. After Jesus catches up the Church, I will not be here when the things it describes happen.”

This attitude is a “cop-out,” to use popular terminology. Revelation 1:3 instructs us to “*keep those things which are written in it.*” One must understand Revelation in order to be able to keep the things written within it.

God would not give us a delightfully uncomplicated book, then close it with a chapter draped in such theological profoundness that no two people could agree on its meaning.

In defense of this majestic book, please consider these next statements.

God would never design anything with intent to confuse or disturb you. Revelation is not a confusing book. Remember, God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). It is Satan who creates confusion, not God. For anyone to declare Revelation confusing would be tantamount to making Satan its author.

As Scripture states, the Word is spiritually discerned and is foolishness to the carnal or natural man (I Cor. 2:14). Do not allow the kinds of thoughts to enter your mind which say, “Revelation is not as important a book as the other sixty-five.”

Paul wrote to Timothy: “*All Scripture [including Revelation] is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man [or woman] of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*” (II Tim. 3:16-17).

We have no choice but to recognize the value of Revelation for “*doctrine,*” for “*reproof,*” for “*correction,*” and for “*instruction in righteousness.*”

The Word of God is set forth to teach, correct and instruct. Revelation is profitable. God gave it to us to prepare us for the Christian walk. You and I can never become thoroughly furnished, or equipped, to do God’s work without a good understanding of the book of Revelation.

Through the ages, many have worked for God while being only partially equipped. Thank God for what they have accomplished; but had they been thoroughly equipped, they would have been even more successful.

To become so completely made ready to do all good works does require study of God’s Word. Such study begins in Genesis and is completed in the last chapter of Revelation.

United States Army recruiters use the theme, “Be all that you can be – in the Army.” According to Second Timothy 2:3-4, we too are an army. We should strive to be the best (I Cor. 9:24-27); and to do so, we must embrace all of God’s Word. Every believer has a favorite verse, chapter or book; but one cannot develop a fully equipped and mature Christian life on just that small part of Scripture.

There can be no question about Satan’s hatred for the book of Revelation. He has opposed it in every conceivable manner.

For many believers, he has successfully kept them away from or out of this book by one means or another.

One person will cop-out on reading material about which he or she is either misinformed or totally ignorant. Another will say, “Well, I read the last chapter and we win, so . . . ?”

Another favorite cop-out is, “It really does not matter what I believe. God has everything planned, and it will come out just that way.”

Cop-outs of this type only reveal a lack of knowledge of the very book these people confess to believe.

Through the years, I have discovered one of Satan's best methods for keeping the majority of the Church community confused about, or totally out of, the book of Revelation is by making it a book of "doom and gloom." Please take note of a very important instruction the Holy Spirit provides through the apostle Paul:

*How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together [a meeting of believers] each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.*

1 Corinthians 14:26

The word *edify* means to "build up" or "equip." Every church service should edify the believer. He or she should leave better equipped to serve God and win others. If something is done or taught in a service that does not edify, the believers will have been shortchanged or weakened rather than strengthened.

All things must edify, and that includes the presentation of the majestic book of Revelation. It cannot be a book of doom and gloom, as such does not edify.

I grew up hearing Revelation as a doom and gloom message. I may have learned a few things about that book, but my spirit man was left unedified.

After entering the ministry in 1950, I began a serious study of the book of Revelation. I thank God for those under whose ministry I sat through the years. Although their method of presentation painted a horrible picture of the future, I still learned from them.

True, I was not edified; I was often frightened out of my wits, yet I learned.

Sometimes the teacher made the Antichrist larger than Jesus, and Satan almost equal to God. Other things were also taught which were not biblically sound, such as how the Antichrist will rule the world and all who are left on the earth will take the mark of the Beast. As you study, you will discover as I did that neither of the above points is true.

God does not cause fear. *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* (II Tim. 1:7). He would not conclude His Word with a frightening story.

Adopt a positive approach in your study of Revelation. You can understand it; it is not complicated. Make this confession:

***The book of Revelation is God’s Word. God has set it forth for me. By faith, I am going to reach into God’s Word and assimilate it into my inner man.***

Determine to accomplish this under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

## **EXAMINE SCRIPTURES IN CONTEXT**

When studying God’s Word, follow this rule: *Take no Scriptures out of their original setting.* When we examine a few Scriptures in relation to the whole Bible, we can easily discern their true meaning. Consequently, we are *“rightly dividing the word of truth”* (II Tim. 2:15).

After examining Scriptures out of context, people tend to draw final conclusions that are different from the ones God intended. This explains why Revelation mystifies so many people.

Before I began studying Revelation, I had heard mostly negative teachings about it. However, God impressed upon me that if I would pursue the study of this book, He would open the true meaning to me.

To begin, I purchased several volumes on Revelation. As I examined them, my interest faded. God did not wish my thinking to be clouded. These books, which failed to inform the readers as to what God commanded concerning this prophecy, certainly did not excite them about living today in the “end times.” God wanted me to study the Word itself.

Those who refer to Revelation as “a book of hidden meanings” violate the title that God Himself chose. The word *revelation* means “that which is revealed or made clearly visible.”

The further I proceeded into Revelation, the more clearly I understood it. After my first few readings, I began to receive pieces of understanding from the Holy Spirit. Finally, the jigsaw puzzle of understood details fit into a single unit. After years of study, I clearly understood the book of Revelation from the first to the last verse.

## **A BOOK OF BLESSINGS**

God promises a blessing to those who read Revelation:

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants – things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.*

***Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.***

Revelation 1:1-3

Personally, I have discovered the truth of the statement: “*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy.*” The audiences to whom I have taught Revelation have also been greatly blessed.

Follow this advice when teaching Revelation:

1. Conduct the sessions on consecutive evenings, urging your congregation to be present at every one.
2. Major on the role of Jesus and God's master performance rather than on the Antichrist and mark of the Beast.
3. Teach in a simple, positive and enthusiastic manner, staying away from speculation and sensationalism. The content of the book itself is sensational. Prophecy teachers have long been known for their speculation, which often draws attention to what they do not know. This statement is not intended to be judgmental, but a positive critique of methods normally used.

With much help from the Holy Spirit in more than sixty years of study, I have carefully avoided the theological snares of past methods of interpretation. What you are about to read is simple, positive, dramatic, stimulating and true. I can promise you that you will be edified, not frightened.

Study Revelation. Understand it and claim your blessing. You will discover that it is a book full of blessings.

From John's information concerning himself, we learn a vitally important lesson. He revealed that he had been exiled from the mainland to the isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. That was not a great place then, and it is not too sought after today. John was in his mid-nineties when exiled. We must pay attention to his statement in verse 10 of chapter 1:

*"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."*

John maintained his spiritual life, regardless of circumstances or adverse conditions. Because he refused to allow adversity to interfere with his relationship to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he remained blessed of God. This prophecy was given to John in 95 a.d., twenty-five years after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d.

– CHAPTER 2 –  
**Five Keys**



Within Revelation are five keys which unlock its meaning. It also contains the master key necessary to unlock other “obscure” passages of the Bible. This proves that we are to give the book of Revelation as much attention as we do the rest of God’s Word.

**KEY ONE: THE REVELATION OF JESUS**

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants – things which must shortly take place.*

Revelation 1:1

Most godly men teach only part of Revelation. They discuss the period of plagues and tragedies, the Antichrist system of government, the mark of the Beast and the Battle of Armageddon. But it is *Jesus*, not these catastrophes, who dominates this book.

Some translations use the title, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*. This is a misnomer. Revelation is the “revealing” or “unveiling” of Jesus Christ. John was the first of many who were to understand.

Since Jesus is the central theme of Revelation, one can understand the blessing attached to this great prophecy.

**THREE VIEWS OF JESUS**

The New Testament records three views of Jesus.

1. From the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), we visualize Jesus Christ the Man: He who came to save the lost. Millions of church people know Jesus only as Savior.
2. From the Epistles, particularly those written by the apostle Paul, we visualize Jesus as the Head of the Church. We see Him as He relates daily with His followers. Many believers know the Christ of the Gospels and the Epistles.
3. Revelation gives us the third dimension to complete our view of the Lord. From this book, we visualize Jesus as the triumphant Lord. We learn that, as King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus will rule over His unending kingdom on earth. Knowing Jesus in His fullness is very exciting.

## **KEY TWO: THE BELIEVER'S RIGHT TO UNDERSTAND REVELATION**

Once again, let us look at Revelation 1:1:

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants – things which must shortly take place.*

The word *servants* is plural. Some translations omit the second “s.” This is unfortunate and misleading. “Servant” (singular) implies that John was blessed above all men. But John was the first of many to whom the understanding of Revelation was to come. The second key is this: Jesus has five keys given us, His servants, the biblical right to understand and enjoy the book of Revelation.

The apostle Paul instructs us to study the Word: “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (II Tim. 2:15, KJV).

The New Testament tells us that the Holy Spirit will teach us the truth and open our understanding of the Word: “*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own*

*authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13).*

When the Holy Spirit directed my vision to it, I discovered the second “s” in “*servants.*” I suddenly realized that, in the same way the Holy Spirit showed me that magnificent “s,” He would give me a complete understanding of the book of Revelation! Because of the plurality of servants, you have a biblical right to understand the book of Revelation.

### **KEY THREE: PARALLEL ACCOUNTS OF HEAVEN AND EARTH**

Revelation’s chapter divisions separate two stories which parallel one another. One occurs in heaven, the other on earth; both take place during a seven-year period.

The following passage fixes this seven-year time frame:

*“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.*

*“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty- two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.*

*“And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.”*

Daniel 9:24-26

Daniel speaks of the seventy weeks of God’s determined dealings with the

nation of Israel. Each day of those weeks is one-year long. Careful examination of this passage reveals that the events it describes cover years and could not possibly occur in the same number of days. The seventy weeks cover a period of 490 years rather than 490 days.

Daniel tells us when the period begins and at what point there is a break. The break comes at the close of the sixty-ninth week when Jesus the Prince enters Jerusalem and is rejected by those He comes to save. This leaves only one week, the seventieth, for future fulfillment. Since each day equals one year, this last week actually covers a seven-year period.

The Church Age occurs between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. It began with the ministry of Christ and ends with the Rapture of the Church. Since the Church Age is the same as the kingdom of God on earth (Luke 16:16), we know its beginning. We also know it ends with the Rapture which precedes God's last seven years of work with Israel. (See Rom. 11:25.) Presently, we are living in the "*time of the end*" (Dan. 12:4). (Daniel's term time of the end should not carry a connotation of doom. It simply indicates that the Church Age is closing.)

At the end of the Church Age – the seventieth and final week of Daniel's prophecy – the "Tribulation Period" begins. The book of Daniel informs us about this period. The book of Revelation confirms the truth in Daniel, then describes the details of the activities occurring in heaven and on earth during this time.

The story of heaven is described in Revelation 4, 5, 19 and 20; the story of earth in Revelation 6, 8, 9, 16, 19 and 20. Chapters 4 and 5 reveal the activities of the people and angels around God's throne. We make an easy transition from the heavenly story in chapter 5 to the earthly story in chapter 6. The description of earth's activities during the years of the Tribulation originates in this chapter.

A lapse of continuity follows chapter 6. Chapters 8 and 9 continue the earthly story from chapter 6. Chapter 16 again picks up the earthly story.

Chapter 19 begins with the heavenly story, then makes a quick transition to the earthly one. Chapter 20 continues with the earthly story, then concludes with the heavenly one.

## **KEY FOUR: INFORMATIONAL CHAPTERS**

The remaining chapters do not necessarily aid the continuity of the two unfolding stories, but add information. Instead of continuing the immediate story, occasionally one of these chapters enlarges upon details concerning a person, group of people, or particular event occurring in one of the stories.

When writing about a particular geographical area, one would first write a wide variety of cameo stories about the area's outstanding individuals, families and events. When incorporating the cameo stories into one major story, however, the writer would weave them together with the central theme of the chosen area. This is the way the book of Revelation is written.

The informational chapters are 7, 10-15, 17 and 18. Chapters 20, 21 and 22 describe the events occurring after the seven-year period: the 1,000-year reign of Christ, the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem. Although they share information of the glorious future, they do not fit in the category of informational chapters.

Throughout this book, each chapter is labeled as to whether it concerns the earthly or heavenly story, or is informational.

## **KEY FIVE: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE EVENTS**

*“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”*

Revelation 1:19

We can see from these instructions to John that the book of Revelation

describes past, present and future events.

## **HISTORIANS VS. FUTURISTS**

In the theological world there are two major schools of thought concerning the interpretation of Revelation: historian and futurist.

The historian declares and attempts to show that events in history have already fulfilled the prophecy of Revelation. He concludes that Revelation is of no significance to us today.

If the events in Revelation have already come to pass, we are living in the glorious 1,000-year reign of righteousness and peace on earth. But “a reign of peace” does not describe conditions on earth today. The historical events of Revelation tie the future to the past and further establish the Bible as a complete record of God’s plan.

The futurist teaches that events in chapters 4 through 22 are unfulfilled. The story created on this presumption does not correlate with events of the Old and New Testaments. It contains missing pieces and lacks harmony. Both the historian and the futurist have overlooked the reference to past, present and future in Revelation 1:19.

## **NO CONTRADICTIONS**

The Bible is composed of sixty-six volumes written by some forty men of God over a period of more than 1,600 years. The Bible’s continuity is superb. Despite what liberal theologians have said (usually to cover their own lack of understanding), there are no contradictions in the Bible.

God manifests and moves in patterns. This is one way in which He is able to convince us of His presence. He declares in Malachi 3:6, “*For I am the Lord, I do not change.*” God, who is steadfast, does not break His patterns.

Since the previous sixty-five books of the Bible fit together and support

one another, Revelation must fit the same pattern. To tell the future, Revelation must have the support of the past; there must be a definite link in the overall story. If there were no link, liberal theologians could declare that Revelation is not a part of the canon of Scripture, but was added at some later time.

We will see that Revelation contains numerous references to past events drawn out of the Old and New Testaments. These support the story being told and lay a solid foundation for future events.

## SUMMARY

**Key One:** The central theme of Revelation is the revealing of Jesus Christ.

**Key Two:** Jesus' servants are to understand this revelation.

**Key Three:** The stories of the events in heaven and on earth during the Tribulation Period are woven around the central theme of Jesus.

**Key Four:** The informational chapters provide more details about the stories of heaven and earth.

**Key Five:** The events in Revelation occur in the past, present and future.

# Part II



# **Letters to the Seven Churches**

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– CHAPTER 3 –

# Revelation 1

## The Cover Letter



Chapter 1 introduces Revelation. We learn how and where John received the prophecy. This chapter also contains a large portion of the cover letter which John wrote to the seven churches in Asia.

John sent each church three items:

1. A copy of the prophecy.
2. A cover letter explaining how he received the prophecy and his reason for sending it.
3. A letter dictated to him by the Lord Jesus Christ which contains instructions for each church. (These letters are recorded in Revelation 2 and 3.)

The cover letter to the seven churches in Asia begins with John's salutation.

*John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:*

*Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.*

*To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

*Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.*

*“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

Revelation 1:4-8

Since John knew that this letter would travel throughout the churches, he used it to remind them of the many great truths of God’s Word. His salutation is filled with Gospel!

John greets the churches for himself and sends greetings from the Holy Spirit (symbolized in verse 4 by “*the seven Spirits who are before His [God’s] throne*”). John sends them greetings from Jesus Christ, then describes Jesus in a statement containing no defeat. He closes it by giving glory and praise to the Lord.

## **THE SECOND COMING**

Verse 7 portrays the return of Jesus:

*Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.*

Do not confuse the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with His *appearing*.

The appearing occurs when Jesus departs the throne of God and appears in the heavens above the earth to wait for the Holy Spirit to resurrect the dead in Christ. Then the living and resurrected saints are caught up together in the clouds and rise to meet the Lord in the air. We call this “the catching up of the Church” or “the Rapture.” (The term *rapture*, which does not appear in the Scriptures, means “to be caught up.”) Numerous Scripture references

place the catching away *prior* to the Tribulation.

Verse 7 describes Jesus' return to earth, when He takes control of all governments in order to fulfill the prophecies of Isaiah 9:6. He sets up His 1,000-year reign, a time of peace and righteousness, and rules with "*a rod of iron*" (Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15), firm authority. He does not rule the Church with firm authority because its members are like Him. But there are people over whom He must rule in this manner. Only the true Church will be aware of Jesus' *appearing*. The rest of the world will not know about it until after the saints are gone. When Jesus returns to take over all government, "*every eye will see Him . . . And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him*" (Rev. 1:7).

John ends the salutation by again speaking of Jesus: "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,*" says the Lord, "*who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty*" (Rev. 1:8).

## **THE EXILE**

Verse 9 continues John's letter:

*I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

John explains that he was exiled from the mainland and the company of the saints to the isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. The Aegean Sea lies between Greece on the west and Turkey on the east. All seven churches addressed in chapters 2 and 3 were located in the area we today identify as Turkey. John had lost favor with governmental powers and the religious leaders of the day because he preached God's Word and testified of Jesus.

The religious leaders wanted to kill John. History records numerous attempts made on his life, but God gave John divine protection.

Notice that John did not allow natural circumstances and conditions to affect his spiritual welfare or outlook. He says, *“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day”* (Rev. 1:10).

Many Christians allow adversity to badly affect their spirituality. Their attitude, confession and testimony become negative. We should never allow adverse circumstances to affect our spiritual relationship with our heavenly Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or the company of believers. As followers of Jesus, we can govern circumstances rather than permit them to control us.

John realized that by maintaining his spiritual relationship and proper attitude he would remain elevated above existing circumstances. He was not trying to exercise mind over matter to deny the reality of his exile. He acknowledged it as fact but continued walking in the Spirit, enjoying the attention provided him by Jesus through the Holy Spirit and the angels.

## **THE LORD'S DAY**

John said, *“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet”* (verse 10).

Throughout the New Testament, the “Lord’s Day” is considered the first day of the week, the day on which Jesus arose victorious over death and hell. He had defeated Satan, solved the sin problem and provided complete salvation for the spirits, souls and bodies of all mankind.

We should not regard one day higher than another because we worship our Lord seven days a week. Under the Old Covenant, the last day of the week – the seventh, Saturday – was the Sabbath. Israel worshiped God at the end of the week. Scripture states that Jewish people keep the Sabbath as their way of remembering their covenant with God, originating with Abraham. (See Gen. 15:18; 17:2-11; Exod. 31:16-17.)

As taught by the apostle Paul, the Lord’s Day is a part of the New – and better – Covenant. Under the New Covenant, believers began worshipping

God on the first day. The Sabbath, or seventh day, should still be a day of rest.

## **EMPHASIS ON JESUS**

John's cover letter continues:

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."*

*Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.*

*His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;*

*He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.*

*And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

*"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.*

*"The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of*

*the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”*

## Revelation 1:10-20

Notice that the “*voice*” which John heard sounded like a trumpet (verse 10). When John begins receiving the prophecy, he again describes the voice that sounds like a trumpet (Rev. 4:1). John’s emphasis in the cover letter is always on Jesus.

John describes Jesus in detail and states that “*out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.*” This *two-edged sword* is God’s Word.

Jesus’ statement that He has “*the keys of Hades and of Death*” clearly establishes His victorious conquest of *hell and death*. From the cross, where He paid the price for our sins, Jesus descended into hell. As He left Hades (or hell), Jesus completely defeated Satan and all his angels, principalities and powers. What an indescribable triumph! Then He crossed into paradise and ministered to the righteous dead to prepare them for their transferal to heaven.

Jesus explains to John the “*seven stars*” and the “*seven lampstands*” [called “*candlesticks*” in KJV]. The stars are the “*angels of the seven churches*”; the *lampstands* are the “*seven churches.*” An angel assigned to each of the seven churches provides angelic assistance to that church in its community. The angel will serve as both messenger and assistant to the pastor. This is a part of God’s plan of communication.

The book of Revelation is a great source for the study of angels and their ministry. For additional insight into the ministry of angels, examine Psalm 91:11-12 and Hebrews 1:13-14. The words for angel and pastor are not interchangeable. Their only common characteristic is that both are messengers. In this book there are fifty-five references to God’s angels. Angelology becomes a major theme within the chapters of Revelation.

The *lampstand* symbolizes representation before the throne of God; the angel is evidence of the angelic assignment in behalf of that church. The angel has the responsibility of seeing that John's letter is delivered to the pastor of each church and to the saints within each region. The lampstands, which identify the churches, reveal each church to be a lighthouse to its community.

People who doubt the existence of angels will be convinced of their existence following a study of Revelation. This book describes how many there are, what they do and for whom they minister. We too have representation before the throne of God. Today, a mighty angel is over every region of the Church, assigned by God to work on behalf of that region.

## **ONE BODY**

The believers of all regions must relate to one another in perfect harmony. The apostle Paul says, "*Now indeed there are many members, yet one body*" (I Cor. 12:20). Jesus prayed, "*Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are*" (John 17:11). He also prayed:

*"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."*

John 17:20-21

The words you speak about Jesus Christ to others are vitally important. Jesus has already prayed not only for you, but also for those you are going to win to Him.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Church, "*Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you*" (I Cor. 1:10). The many divisions among

God's children have hindered both the preaching of the Gospel and the salvation of many.

The world states: "All you Christians believe that you have the same heavenly Father and Savior. You believe the same Bible and that you are going to the same place when you die. Why are you so divided? Why do you often oppose and fight one another?"

Not only Revelation, but the whole Word of God teaches Christian unity. Divisions must not occur within the Christian community.

Paul said to the people of Corinth: "*Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*" (I Cor. 1:12-13). He went on to tell them that they were carnal and spiritually immature by allowing those divisions to remain among them.

Because of our divisions, we have almost wrecked the Gospel of Jesus Christ for multitudes of people. We have been carnal about our denominational structures and narrow in our beliefs. Some people have gone so far as to imply that unless one is a member of their group, he could not possibly go to heaven!

With the Holy Spirit educating us, we are beginning to mature, but we still have room for improvement! Even though leaders do not teach sectarianism, immature Christians quickly divide; following after one particular preacher or labeling themselves after one particular movement. In addition to denominational divisions, among other divisions, are the evangelical, fundamentalist groups and the charismatics. They seldom worship together.

Realize that you can disagree without being disagreeable. When the children of God become disagreeable, they are manifesting the wrong spirit. As long as you disagree but continue walking together in love for the common cause, you form a vehicle that the Holy Spirit will use for sweeping

multitudes of people into the kingdom of God.

Having a right attitude toward a fellow Christian provides the Holy Spirit opportunity to work in his behalf. The Holy Spirit will enlighten and correct whoever is “in the wrong.” Sometimes when both people involved are a little off-center, He works on each one. Christians should complement, aid and support one another. By flowing together, they are allowing God to provide a spiritual umbrella of protection from those who perpetrate false teachings.

You have the strength and ability to correct someone in error without putting him in condemnation or casting him out. If he does not change, follow the instructions in the Scriptures. Set him aside for a season, then go restore him. (See Rom. 16:17; Gal. 6:1; I Tim. 3:14-15.) That is the real love of God.

Of the seven churches in Asia, Satan gained a foothold in six. To reach our churches today, he uses the same tools that he used then. If members of the Church lose their first love (of Jesus), permit false teachers and doctrines, and speak negative confessions, the Devil can either destroy or divide them. Divisions weaken their influence and ability.

We must grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. Paul assures us that we will “*all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man*” (Eph. 4:13) and that we will “*grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ — from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies*” (Eph. 4:15-16).

Revelation summarizes many major points of doctrine in the Bible. It completes the teachings of the Old and New Testaments. In addition to studying the prophecy disclosed through Revelation, we will also examine many other beautiful truths.

John clearly establishes that the *seven lampstands* symbolize the seven churches, each of which should be a “lighthouse.” The *seven stars* symbolize angels or messengers.

This explanation ends the introductory chapter of Revelation, setting the stage for the exciting material which follows. We will examine the conclusion of John's letter in our discussion of Revelation 22.

– CHAPTER 4 –

# Revelation 2

## Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira



Revelation 2 and 3 record the seven letters to the churches in Asia. In writing these letters, John simply served as secretary to the Lord Jesus. Jesus dictated the letters; John wrote them down and sent them to the proper church.

### **A PATTERN OF MINISTRY**

The letters reveal a pattern in Jesus' way of dealing with the churches.

First, Jesus commends each church for its characteristics which please Him. He points out faith, patience, works, love, service, hatred for evil and a desire to know the reputation of incoming men.

Second, He calls attention to the things which displease Him, such as leaving first love, wrong confession, false doctrines, false teachers, spiritual death, fear and loss of spiritual power.

Third, without putting any church under condemnation, Jesus calls for repentance. A call to repentance is a work of love because it looks beyond faults to what can be.

Fourth, Jesus warns of the price to be paid for persistent disobedience. His love again prevails in His warning.

A parent who continually criticizes a child without lovingly telling him how to correct his problems demonstrates no love. The child will be laboring under constant condemnation. The wise parent correctively criticizes his child, but also tells him how to improve. Pointing out the consequences of disobedience can be a loving act.

## **THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS** *The Church That Left Its First Love*

*“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:*

*“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary.”’*

Revelation 2:1-3

This is a church with a positive reputation! However, verse 4 states, *“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”* What a charge! A church without the motivation of agape love.

Our first love is for Jesus Christ our Lord. It consists of strong dedication, consecration and commitment. When you first came to know Jesus, were you so excited about Him that you shared Him everywhere? Perhaps some people branded you a fanatic. Others said, “One of these days the newness will wear off and you will settle down.” If that happened, that is tragic! First love can slip away and be replaced by other things; particularly religious activities without Holy Spirit anointing.

We become so involved in trying to serve the Lord that we create all kinds of vehicles through which to serve Him. Before we realize it, service

organizations, committees and programs can place such a demand on our time that they become first place in our lives.

Luke tells the story of Mary and her sister, Martha. Jesus said to Martha, *“You are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her”* (Luke 10:41-42). Mary had chosen to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to His words.

Even though the Ephesians centered their activities around Jesus, they relegated Him to second place. Jesus told them: *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent”* (Rev. 2:5).

Jesus clearly pointed out that the most severe consequence of disobedience was the removal of their lampstand, the representation at God’s throne, from its place.

Jesus continues His analysis of the Ephesian church: *“But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate”* (Rev. 2:6). The Nicolaitans were known for their lascivious lifestyle. They had false teachers and error among them. Jesus did not hate the people; He hated their deeds. They were trying to make an inroad into the churches. They wanted the priesthood to be restored and the church to be controlled by laymen. Nicolas, the deacon, was their leader.

Despite their good points, the Ephesians are called to repentance because they have left their first love. When believers leave their first love, the joy of salvation will also wane. With a loss of joy, one’s spiritual strength will diminish. The Scriptures teach that the *“joy of the Lord”* is our strength (Neh. 8:10), and the psalmist David prayed: *“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You”* (Ps. 51:12-13).

It is simple Bible truth when believers leave their first love; they not only become spiritually weak, but they cease from soul winning. *Joy of salvation* and *joy in the Holy Ghost* are vital to our everyday walk with Jesus. **Today, the Church needs to do what David did – and do it quickly!**

Jesus admonished the church at Ephesus by saying: “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*” (Rev. 2:7). He also makes this statement to the other six churches, encouraging them to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit (Rev. 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

## **LISTEN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT'S VOICE**

After the Church Age began, the Holy Spirit was the predominant influence on the Church. On the Jewish feast day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fulfilled a divine assignment. He manifested for the express purpose of energizing the true Church, the Body of Christ. His oversight and strengthening of the Church will continue until He provides a mature and glorious Church, and plays His role in its resurrection and catching up.

Since the Holy Spirit is the overseer of the Church, our sensitivity to Him is vital. We must allow Him to open God’s Word to us, showing us how to become spiritually mature and how to please God more. He will show us how to keep our faith strong and unpolluted.

## **JUDGE ALL THINGS**

We must be able to identify the Holy Spirit’s voice and His activities. There are many spirits in the world. All of them strive to get our attention in order to bring us under their influence.

The apostle Paul taught, “*He who is spiritual judges all things*” (I Cor. 2:15). Those who are truly spiritual will not accept something at face value. They will judge it according to Scripture to determine whether it is the Holy Spirit’s work, before accepting it or becoming involved. Many Christians say, “I have the witness that this is the Holy Spirit,” as a basis for belief. They get

themselves in trouble by playing spiritually unsound games. Read the textbook, the Bible, to find out how to react. Once Christians become scripturally sound, relying on the Holy Spirit can become automatic. Biblical soundness plus Holy Spirit leadership equals overall soundness and safety.

It is God's business, not ours, to judge a person. But God has provided us with some safe methods by which to judge the things a person does. We can judge a teaching, prophetic utterance or any other supposedly spiritual act.

Satan has kept many of us from obeying First Corinthians 2:15 by saying, "Be careful lest you judge someone." Instead of letting the Devil talk us out of obeying the Word, we must try every spirit as the Scriptures teach (I John 4:1). The word *try* means "to prove." It certainly does not imply that one should be suspicious, going about as a detective among the saints.

A sign of spiritual maturity is to take the time to judge all things. With the emphasis placed on hearing what the Holy Spirit has to say, use the following guidelines:

## **FIVE POINTS FOR JUDGING THINGS**

### **1. THE HOLY SPIRIT EXALTS NO ONE BUT JESUS.**

Jesus said, "*When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth*" (John 16:13). Jesus also said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6). The Holy Spirit speaks of Jesus for our benefit (John 15:26). We must learn the difference between a prophetic utterance and an exhortation. A prophetic utterance foretells facts which can then be examined for truth. An exhortation urgently presents advice based on the Word.

Many utterances begun with "Thus saith the Lord" are not prophecies, but exhortations. If these utterances exalt a person or group, they are coming out of the human spirit. In passing judgment, ask if Jesus was exalted.

## 2. **THE HOLY SPIRIT ALWAYS DIRECTS ATTENTION TO JESUS.**

To my knowledge there is no biblical record of the Holy Spirit ever drawing attention to Himself, but always to Jesus. The Holy Spirit serves as teacher and amplifier of all that Jesus was, did and taught.

## 3. **THE HOLY SPIRIT NEVER VIOLATES GOD'S WORD.**

Every form of prophecy – utterance, dream, vision or revelation – must be substantiated by God’s Word. Paul instructs us that prophecy must edify, exhort or comfort (I Cor. 14:3). **The Word of God – not the prophetic utterance, dream, vision or revelation – is the final authority.**

Points 1, 2 and 3 are based on Jesus’ teachings recorded in John 14-16.

John 1:1 reads, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* Verse 14 declares, *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”* Jesus is not only the *origin* of the Word, He *is* the Word. The Holy Spirit would not violate nor supersede the Word – Jesus. Because the Holy Spirit brought the written Word into existence, God has no reason to work contrary to it.

Some people say that anything they speak by the name of the Lord and under the authority of the Holy Spirit is as important as the written Word. This is the same as adding to or taking from the Word, which is forbidden. (See Rev. 22:18-19.)

## 4. **THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES EVERYTHING UNTO EDIFICATION.**

The apostle Paul wrote, *“Let all things be done for edification”* (I Cor. 14:26). The Holy Spirit never overpowers or burdens; never brings fear, depression or despair. He challenges and builds you up; He desires to charge you like a battery and equip you for all good works. When you

are under the influence of the Holy Spirit, you continually edify your fellow believers.

## 5. **THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHSTANDS ALL EXAMINATION.**

The Scriptures teach us to try, prove and examine God; to taste and see that He is good; to try the spirits to see if they are of Him. (See Ps. 34:8; Mal. 3:10; I Cor. 2:15; I John 4:1.)

The Holy Spirit is delighted when we obey Scripture; He welcomes our examination of His works. It may take a day, a week or longer to determine whether what was said or done was of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gently leads. If a spirit is driving or hurrying you, telling you that unless you accept its statement immediately you will miss God, it is not the Holy Spirit.

If a person through whom a word or action has come is resentful of examination, he is acting by the wrong spirit. Whenever someone offers to prophesy or give you “a word from God,” tell that person that, after hearing the word, you will examine it and determine its soundness.

If you do not use these five points to judge all things, you open yourself to possible deception by any of the erroneous spirits at work against the Church. Do not accept anything without judging it.

## **YOU ARE AN OVERCOMER**

Revelation 2:7 continues:

*“To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”*

In addition to emphasizing sensitivity to the Spirit, each of the seven letters contains a statement to the overcomer. This indicates that overcomers

were in each church, including the one at Sardis that Satan had destroyed. Today, overcomers are also in every church.

The seven statements made to the overcomers in the letters to the churches follow:

1. *“To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God”* (Rev. 2:7).
2. *“He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death”* (Rev. 2:11).
3. *“To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it”* (Rev. 2:17).
4. *“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations – ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’ – as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star”* (Rev. 2:26-28).
5. *“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels”* (Rev. 3:5).
6. *“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name”* (Rev. 3:12).
7. *“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne”* (Rev. 3:21).

Once a person recognizes his need for Jesus, then makes his initial move, he begins overcoming Satan. When his action brings him to the point of accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord, he has overcome! From then on, he overcomes daily as he walks with Jesus. To enable us to successfully overcome, Jesus said, “My Father and I will abide in you” (John 14:23). The

Holy Spirit plus the authority of the Word make this a reality. Jesus said, “*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you*” (John 15:7).

Consider these biblical facts: When one accepts Jesus, he overcomes Satan; therefore, he is reborn as an overcomer. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God’s Word, personal testimony, the blood of the Lamb, and angelic ministry, one continues overcoming daily. The overcomer always succeeds!

Some have reasoned that they are not overcomers because Satan still tempts or buffets them as Paul was buffeted. (See II Cor. 12:7.) Consequently they forever strive to become what God says they already are.

Accept the truth. You are a new creature. He that is within you is greater than he that is in the world. Since God is for you, the Devil is up against Him. You can do all things because of Jesus and His strength. (See Rom. 8:31; Phil. 4:13; II Cor. 5:17; I John 4:4.)

Jesus said, “*I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33). Paul said, “*We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*” (Rom. 8:37). Choose to believe what God’s Word says about you rather than the strange theology which appeals to your carnal mind. Your confession is extremely important because you are what you confess to be. As you begin confessing what the Word says, you create an atmosphere in which God works to lift you above the circumstances that exist. Confess, ***I am an overcomer!***

## **THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA** ***The Persecuted Church***

The second letter went to the church of Smyrna.

*“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:*

*“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich);*

*and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

*“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”*

Revelation 2:8-11

Again, notice the emphasis upon hearing the Spirit and the statement to the overcomer. People blasphemed saying they were Jews of “*a synagogue of Satan.*” Some of the people in the church were threatened with imprisonment.

The Lord said, “Even if they imprison you, it will be for a short time. If you lose your life because you have been faithful, I will give you a crown of life.” He is encouraging them to be overcomers in their circumstances.

## **THE CHURCH OF PERGAMOS**

### ***The Compromising Church***

In the letter to the third church we read:

*“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:*

*“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”*

Revelation 2:12-13

This church seemed like a good church. It had works – a miracle in itself considering its location in a very wicked area. (One of its people, Antipas, had even been martyred.) In spite of the adversity, the people of the church did not deny their faith and held fast to the name *Jesus*. This is extremely commendable. Look, though, at the next verses:

*“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak [Num. 22] to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*

*Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”*

Revelation 2:14-15

Again, notice that the Lord did not say He hated the people; He hated their doctrines, their teaching, and the error they were spreading among God’s children. Because of this error, they were in a weakened position in an area where Satan’s manifestation was evident.

Paul writes, *“But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more”* (Rom. 5:20). When going into a city known to be wicked, you must maintain a positive godly attitude. Say, ***Praise God, I am going into an area where the Lord is really showing Himself! I will be an additional vessel for God to work through!*** You should look forward to these opportunities of Christian service.

The church of Pergamos had come under the influence of false teachers. The Lord says to them:

*“Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth [the Word]. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. [To the overcomer He says:] To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to*

*eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”*

Revelation 2:16-17

Again, Jesus places emphasis upon listening to the Spirit and reveals the rewards of the overcomer.

## **THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA**

### ***The Corrupt Church***

*“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.”’”*

Revelation 2:18-19

This sounds like a description of a fine church. But this passage continues in verse 20:

*“Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess [God did not call this false teacher a prophetess – she called herself one], to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.*

*“Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.*

*“I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.*

*“Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come.”*

Revelation 2:20-25

This church had a great reputation, but they permitted a woman named Jezebel to teach a false doctrine that seduced God’s children into violating His Word. God said that He would deal with Jezebel very harshly. Then He instructed those in Thyatira who had not participated in the sin or condoned her doctrine to hold fast to the good that they had.

Be cautious of those among you whom you do not know. Should you listen to them, remember to judge their teaching carefully. If part of the teaching is erroneous, put all of it away from you. Do not change your views.

There is always error when truth is perverted. Teachers like Jezebel appear spiritual and always claim great insight into the things of God. However, deceived themselves, they are able to deceive others because of their abilities as teachers.

## **ASSEMBLE TOGETHER**

The church of Thyatira was another of the six churches in error. Some people, unable to find the “perfect church,” do not go to church. They substitute listening to tapes, reading books and praying. All of these things are good, provided they do not replace fellowship with other believers and study of God’s Word.

We should not forsake the “*assembling of ourselves together*” (Heb. 10:25). This is important and will become more so in our rapid approach toward the day of Jesus’ appearing. Every believer must be part of a fellowship of God’s children in his community and accept whatever role God assigns there.

Be cautious of any attitude which causes you to assume that you are too spiritual for other Christians. The more spiritual you are, the more you can assist others in their growth. The greater your spirituality, the greater your responsibility for others. Of these four churches, three are called on for genuine repentance or else!

– CHAPTER 5 –

# Revelation 3

## Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea



### THE CHURCH OF SARDIS

#### *The Dead Church*

Despite the inroads Satan made into six of the churches, he was able to destroy only the church at Sardis.

*“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.*

*“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.*

*“Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*

*“You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.”’*

Revelation 3:1-4

Some saints who remained in this church did their best to serve God under adverse conditions. Jesus declared that He wanted those faithful ones with

Him because of their worthiness.

Jesus calls on the Church as a whole to repent and return to Him. He warned that otherwise it would be too late; He will come back unexpectedly. Verse 3 states: *“Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.”*

A similar statement made by Jesus is recorded in Luke 21:36: *“Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape.”*

Jesus said that he who overcomes and continues to overcome shall never have his name blotted out of the Book of Life.

*“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”*

Revelation 3:5

The above Scripture does not support the teaching that, no matter how you live, once your name is in the Lord’s Book, it will never be blotted out. Notice that the statement is made to the overcomer, not to one who has been overcome.

## **THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA** *The Loyal and Faithful Church*

The church of Philadelphia was the only one of the seven into which Satan had been unable to make an inroad.

*“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”:*

*“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word,*

*and have not denied My name.”*

Revelation 3:7-8

The Philadelphia church had an open door, an outreach and strength enough to take advantage of the open door. Do not emphasize “*little*” – emphasize “*strength*.” This church confessed that they kept the Word of God. They knew that God’s Word is of utmost importance.

## **STUDY THE WORD**

Every Christian should have a good working knowledge of the Word obtained through prayerful study. Knowing the Word is vital. It gives you security against believing false teaching and many so-called prophecies, dreams and visions. When these things do not line up with God’s Word, you can dismiss them. But if you do not know the Word, you cannot judge such things. You will likely believe them, only to wonder later how you became so misguided.

Instead of lightly reading the Bible, you must study it. Otherwise, you will not comprehend its marvelous truth. To learn the Word of God, meditate in it day and night (Josh. 1:8), inviting the aid of the Holy Spirit. You will be blessed in your studies.

Use a number of good translations, a dictionary and an analytical concordance which contains Hebrew and Greek dictionaries. Both children and wayfaring (unlearned) men are able to understand the Scriptures. (See Isa. 35:8; Prov. 22:6; Luke 2:42-48.) In other words, the Bible is not hard to understand.

One does not need to know Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and Latin in order to accurately interpret God’s Word. When you prayerfully meditate, you will receive from the Lord insight into His Word – including the book of Revelation. Always study having invited the Holy Spirit to assist you.

## **THE PHILADELPHIANS' FIRM POSITION**

The Philadelphians kept God's Word and did not deny the name of Jesus. They also used their strength to carry forth the outreach assigned to them. This church tolerated no false teaching nor false doctrine. Its firm position caused other people to see the error of their ways and to begin worshiping God.

*“Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie – indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.”*

Revelation 3:9

## **CHRISTIANS WILL ESCAPE THE TRIBULATION**

The following Scripture contains two key words:

*“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”*

Revelation 3:10

The word *from* makes it clear that those who adhere to the Word will have no part of the hour of trial, the Tribulation Period.

The people who hold the erroneous view that the Church will go through the Tribulation state that the Church is not ready to meet the Lord. They interpret “the Church” to be the institutional, man-made religious orders which never will be ready for Jesus. The true Church – consisting wholly of born-again, Spirit-led followers of Jesus who believe in and keep God's Word – will not go through the Tribulation.

The Greek word for *from* in verse 10 is *ek* which means “out of” or “from.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus was saying, “Because you have kept My Word with great

patience, you will have no part of this hour of Tribulation.”

The second key word is “*hour.*” The meaning of the Greek word for *hour* in this verse indicates far more than a sixty-minute period of time. It refers to an extended period. Both Daniel and Revelation establish that the Tribulation covers seven years.

The Church will not be tried during this period because it is already undergoing trials. It is exercising a tremendous amount of faith to prepare for Jesus’ appearing.

Paul says, “*For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged*” (I Cor. 11:31). The standard we use to judge ourselves is God’s Word. “*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb. 4:12). The word *discerner* is also translated “judge.”<sup>2</sup> The Word of God is a judge of the intent of the heart.

The apostle Peter says, “*The time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God*” (I Pet. 4:17). Our just God judges us, His children, by having us judge ourselves daily with the Word. God has a perfect plan for us. If we abide by it, we will see the desired results reflected in our lives.

If the Tribulation, coming to try them that dwell upon the earth, is designed for the perfection of the saints, it violates the teachings of the apostle Paul. Paul states, “*And He Himself [Jesus] gave some [the Church], to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping [“perfecting” KJV] of the saints for the work of ministry*” (Eph. 4:11-12). Paul says the ministry, not the Tribulation, perfects the saints. (See Eph. 4:12-16.)

Paul also reveals that the Lord will present “*to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish*” (Eph. 5:27).

We can easily see that it is by ministry that the Church will become glorious, spiritually mature and ready to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. No amount of tribulation or persecution could produce such an accomplishment. The teachings of Jesus, the writings of the apostle Paul, and Scriptures of Revelation (especially Revelation 3:10) clearly teach that the true Church will be caught up before the Tribulation Period begins.

The Lord continues to admonish the Philadelphian church: *“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown”* (Rev. 3:11). Jesus admonishes them to stand steadfastly upon what they have learned and heard, and to stay in that position based on the Word of God and the name of Jesus.

Verses 12 and 13 contain the statement to the overcomer and the direction to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit:

*“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.*

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

## **THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA**

### ***The Lukewarm Church***

*“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:*

*“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.”’*

## Revelation 3:14-16

Someone who is “red-hot” for the Lord continually walks with Him and is sensitive to Him. Even if one makes a mistake, he is close enough to God to receive instruction and help for correction. He steadily progresses forward. Someone who is cold is usually honest enough to admit that he is out of fellowship with God.

Because of self-righteousness, the Lord will spew out of His mouth someone who is lukewarm. He attempts to convince others that he is as close to God as anyone else and tries to justify his lack of spirituality.

*“Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked –*

*“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”*

## Revelation 3:17-18

Jesus tells the Laodicean church, which is rich with goods and having need of nothing, “You are wretched, miserable, blind and naked. You need to change.” When they fail to become hot, Jesus has no prerogative but to literally vomit [“spew” KJV] them out.

In the next verse we find out why Jesus takes this position: “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent*” (Rev. 3:19).

The Lord deals firmly with the Laodiceans because He loves them. He calls upon them to be zealous and repent, not to be stubborn. When the Holy Spirit jars you in order to get your attention, recognize that He is doing it because He loves you. React in the way He asks.

*“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”*

Revelation 3:20

Using this Scripture to preach salvation to sinners is taking it out of context. Occasionally, a text used improperly still gets results. Verse 20 has drawn many people back to Jesus or to Him for the first time.

In context, this verse pictures the Lord Jesus outside the Laodicean church having to knock on the door for an opening to go inside where He belongs. He should have always been more than welcome and never forced out. This letter was not written to the unsaved, but to a lukewarm church.

Verses 21 and 22 contain the statement to the overcomer and the urging to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit:

*“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

## **ALL SCRIPTURE IS PROFITABLE**

Some theologians teach that only the letter to the Laodiceans holds a message for us today. The apostle Paul taught, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [“Every Scripture is God-breathed” amp], and is profitable”* (II Tim. 3:16). Every Scripture from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 is profitable.

Paul lists the areas in which all Scripture is profitable *“for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”* (II Tim. 3:16). We all especially need instruction in righteousness, which is right standing with God. We need to study more than our favorite passages – we need the entire Word.

Some theologians and ministers explain away the Word of God. They declare that certain things are not for today, having ceased at the end of a certain period or when a certain man died. Translations produced by modern theologians reduce God's Word to being just another book with no chance of changing a person's life. "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation*" (Rom. 1:16).

All seven letters to the churches are vitally important to us because they are the inspired Word of God. Each contains a message for us – either instruction or warnings for us to heed, lest we fall into the same snares as six of the churches.

After recording the seven letters, John's service as secretary to the Lord Jesus is complete. John is now ready for the Holy Spirit and angel of the Lord to impart to him the full body of the prophecy.

Within the chronology of Revelation, the seven letters appear just prior to the event of Rapture (Rev. 4:1-2).

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Young, LL.D., *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, 22nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1964, 1969, 1970), pp. 375-376.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 257

# Part III



# **The Prophecy Revelation 4-9**

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– CHAPTER 6 –

# Revelation 4 and 5

## *Heaven*



Revelation 4 and 5 reveal the story unfolding in heaven around God’s throne.

*After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”*

*Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.*

Revelation 4:1-3

In Revelation 1 we read that John, when in the Spirit, heard a “voice” from behind which sounded like a “trumpet.” He turned to discover Jesus, from Whom the voice had come. In Revelation 4:1 we read of a second encounter. Again, John hears a voice which sounds like a trumpet. When it speaks, he is immediately in the Spirit and in heaven at God’s throne.

### **A PARALLEL OF THE RAPTURE**

John’s prophetic vision is so clear and perfect in detail that God called it: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Although John was not taken bodily to heaven in the same manner described in Second Corinthians 12:2, his spiritual experience began with the same event awaiting all believers: a rapture. John's experience parallels the Rapture of the Church described by Paul:

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

I Thessalonians 4:16-17

John heard a voice that sounded like a trumpet, then he was taken into heaven. Without question, the Holy Spirit allowed John to experience the Rapture since that event is part of the future. In Scripture, the Rapture is always described as occurring just before the Tribulation.

John's statement, "*Immediately I was in the Spirit . . . in heaven,*" harmonizes with Paul's statement, "*We shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*" (I Cor. 15:51-52). Both depict a swift transition from earth to heaven!

Not only do First Thessalonians 4:16-17 and First Corinthians 15:51-52 harmonize with John's experience in Revelation 4:1-3, but the words of Jesus in Luke 21:36 also agree. Jesus said: "*Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.*"

Notice that John, according to Revelation 4:1, was "looking," or "watching," and the voice which he heard commanded him, "*Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.*" The things he would later witness could only take place after his arrival in heaven, again

showing wonderful agreement with Luke 21:36. Furthermore, one must agree that anyone to whom it is commanded, “*Come up here,*” is going to change locations.

Occasionally, some scoffer will criticize those who believe in the catching away of the Church by accusing them of having an “escape mentality.” If having such an awareness is wrong, then both Jesus and Paul were mistaken (Jesus in Luke 21:36 and Paul in Hebrews 2:3).

Those of us who are true believers in the catching away of the Church are not sitting idly by, crying for Jesus to hurry and get us out of all our troubles, disappointments, sickness and spiritual setbacks. We know we are more than conquerors, and God has provided all that is necessary for life and godliness in this present world (Rom. 8:37; II Pet. 1:3-4). Therefore, we are constantly overcoming and keeping Satan in a defeated condition.

Because of God’s provisions, we do not need Jesus to come and get us out of all these things; but we know He is coming to receive us unto Himself. He has taught us to look for the event, but we must “*do business*” [NKJV] “*or occupy*” [KJV] until He comes (Luke 19:13; 21:28).

What will we *escape*? First Thessalonians 5:1-11 will explain and answer this question quite well. Notice carefully verses 9-11. It is clear and certain that God may not pour out His wrath until the Church has been removed.<sup>1</sup>

## **THE PERSONALITIES OF HEAVEN**

*Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.*

*The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.*

*The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”*

*Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:*

*“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”*

Revelation 4:6-11

John describes the personalities in heaven and their activities. He sees God on His throne surrounded by a magnificent rainbow (Rev. 4:3), a reminder of God’s covenant with Noah following the Flood (Gen. 9:13).

In the Old Testament, God occasionally shared His glory with His people. After a trying experience with the children of Israel, Moses asked God to show him His glory (Exod. 33:18). God answered:

*But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.”*

*And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”*

Exodus 33:20-23

Moses could not have looked upon the glory of God’s face and remained

alive. At the appearing of Jesus, we will experience a change to glorified bodies. Until then, the glory of God is within us. For the believer today, glory is a state of being (John 17:22).

## THE ELDERS

*Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.*

Revelation 4:4

An *elder* is a person God chooses to represent Him and minister to the saints. Jesus shares His ministry with those whom the apostle Paul identifies as “*gifts*”: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:8, 11). In other references, the word *elder* appears, identifying these same “*gifts*.”

From the Old Testament and the book of Revelation, we pick up two additional terms, *olive tree* and *lampstand*, which are symbolic of the character and life of those who are called into the ministry. An olive tree has long life and always produces fruit; a lampstand holds a light which dispels the dark.

Revelation 4 and 5 describe the twenty-four elders in detail. The number *twenty-four* is the double twelve of God’s Word. In the Old Testament, twelve is the number of tribes of Israel; in the New Testament, twelve is the number of Jesus’ apostles.

The Old Testament saints became part of the dead in Christ through Jesus’ death and resurrection (I Cor. 10:1-4). Paul teaches us that when Jesus rose He transferred paradise – a compartment of Sheol (“the place of the dead”) in the bowels of the earth – into the presence of God (Eph. 4:8-10). Paul wrote that being absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8).

When a child of God dies, he goes immediately into the presence of the

Lord in heaven. It is only his physical remains that are placed in the grave. At Jesus' appearing, the dead in Christ, from both the Old and New Testament periods, will be resurrected. We that are alive and remain will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The twenty-four elders represent all the righteous in heaven.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

*And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

Revelation 4:5

In heaven John also saw the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the seven spirits of God. There is only one Spirit of God, but He has many manifestations, diversities and operations. The number *seven* refers to God's completion, the perfect operation of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 11:2 gives insight into the sevenfold Spirit of God. He is referred to as the Spirit of the Lord; the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and the fear of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

The Holy Spirit's presence before the throne of God indicates that He has completed His earthly assignments in behalf of the Church begun on the Jewish feast day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is not removed from the earth. As God the Holy Ghost, He is always present in heaven and on the earth. His earthly assignment will continue throughout the seven years of Tribulation. (See Joel 2:28-32.)

## **THE CRYSTAL SEA**

John sees the crystal sea before the throne. This is not a body of water or large expanse of clear glass. In Scripture, a description of a mass of people accompanies the word *sea* whenever it is used without reference to the name

or location of an existing body of water.

The crystal sea is a great company of people standing before the throne of God. They are referred to as a *sea* because of their vast numbers and as *crystal* because of their right standing before God. Since the twenty-four elders are representatives, the Church whom they represent must also be in heaven. Thus the crystal sea before the throne is the symbol of the whole Church company in heaven.

Crystal is the only earthly substance in which flaws cannot be hidden; in fact, any flaws are magnified. The Lord will present to Himself “*a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but . . . be holy and without blemish*” (Eph. 5:27).

Second Peter 2:9-19 describes the spots and blemishes within the Church as those people who focus attention on themselves by declaring how spiritual they are. They attempt to develop a small following by deceiving new Christians who have little or no foundation in the Word.

Revelation 15:2 describes the crystal sea as being “*mingled with fire.*” This indicates strongly that the Holy Spirit (often symbolized by fire) has produced the crystal sea and is responsible for its presence at the throne of God.

Everything about crystal speaks of the glorious Church: not only its ability to expose flaws, but its beauty, fire and even its melodious sound (made when gently thumped). See “Biblical Rules of Interpretation” (Appendix 11).

## **FOUR GREAT BEASTS**

John sees four living creatures [“*beasts*” kjv] before the throne of God (Rev. 4:8). The first creature appears like a lion, the second like a calf, the third has the face of a man, and the fourth is like a flying eagle. *The Scripture does not explain why the beasts appear in this manner. This is one of the unknowns of Revelation.* (See Appendix 1.)

Overly concerned with symbols, some people attempt to squeeze every possible meaning out of each word and often enter into speculation. Failing to brand their thoughts as personal speculation, they present them as “Thus saith the Lord.” We may speculate, but we do not have a right to state our speculations as if said by the Lord. (See II Pet. 1:20-21.) This fosters confusion and disagreement because many people believe speculations to be exact.

*Why these four creatures appear as they do is only the first of a number of unknowns in Revelation. We will have to wait to find out the meaning of the unknowns.*

The creatures play three major roles.

First, full of eyes and each having six wings, they are guardians to the throne of God. No one can approach the throne from any direction without being detected by one of them.

Second, as angels, they are messengers who assist John with the prophecy.

Third, they are God’s cheerleaders! Every time they start to say, “*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come,*” all who are around the throne prostrate themselves to worship God.

We can see that worship in heaven will be done in divine order because it begins at the signal of the four creatures. In heaven we will enter into a beautiful dimension of worship greater than any we have ever known.

## **THE REASON GOD CREATED YOU**

*“For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Rev. 4:11). The King James Version says: “for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”*

We exist for the purpose of bringing God great pleasure. Enoch’s testimony was that he pleased God: “*And Enoch walked with God; and he*

was not, for God took him” (Gen. 5:24). Today everyone who is pleasing God will be presented before His throne!

## **JESUS AND THE CHURCH**

*And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.*

*Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?”*

*And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.*

*But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”*

*And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*

Revelation 5:1-6

Revelation 5 continues John’s description of heaven. He beholds Jesus *standing* at the throne before His Father. Presently, Jesus is seated in His Father’s throne as our High Priest.

Following His ascension back to heaven, Jesus sat down on the right hand of the Father where He serves as High Priest, making daily intercession for us (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 8:1). This gives us the most complete representation possible before the throne. In exchange, Jesus simply asks us to represent Him on earth. The Holy Spirit empowers believers daily to do this. We should do our utmost for Him, representing Him in the best possible way.

Many believers are succeeding as capable witnesses. The world will know that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God because they will see His followers working, praying and pulling together. All divisions, feuds and “splitting of hairs” over minor theological viewpoints will fade away as the love of Christ perfects us all. (See John 17.)

In chapter 5, John pictures Jesus standing, not sitting. Jesus had just left the throne of God to quickly appear above the earth to receive the true Church unto Himself. Together, the whole company proceeded to the throne of God. Having just returned, Jesus is standing with His company among the elders.

After Jesus walks back to the throne and takes a scroll from the hand of God, He is ready to begin opening the seals of the scroll.

Verse 6 depicts the perfectly harmonious relationship between Jesus Christ the Lamb, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus describes that relationship in the following passage:

*“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”*

John 15:26-27

The “seven horns” and “seven eyes” of the Lamb symbolize the seven Spirits of God sent to the earth.

Revelation 5 continues:

*Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.*

*Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp,*

*and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*

*And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”*

*Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”*

*And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!”*

*Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.*

Revelation 5:7-14

Everything written about the twenty-four elders also applies to all practicing believers.

In Revelation 4:4 the elders are described as having “*thrones.*” The Word teaches, “*we shall reign on the earth*” (Rev. 5:10).

The elders wore white robes [“*raiment*” KJV] and “*crowns of gold*” (Rev. 4:4).

Revelation 5 tells us that the elders are associated with the prayers of saints (verse 8). They sing a new song (verse 9) that they have been redeemed

by the blood of the Lamb from all nations. This clearly identifies them as earthlings.

John sees the representatives of the Church before the throne of God as Jesus opens the first seal. When the Tribulation begins, the Church company is standing in heaven to observe the future events.

## **THE ANGELS**

In verse 11, John sees the angelic company comprised of “*ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands*” – that is 100 billion! The doctrine of guardian angels, who also minister, is biblical.

Angels are assigned to minister to and for every born-again child of God. Paul says, “*Are they [the angels] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*” (Heb. 1:14).

God’s angels watch over you constantly to protect you. “*For He [the Lord] shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone*” (Ps. 91:11-12).

It is possible to entertain an angel and be unaware of it. (See Heb. 13:2.) The saints have a tremendous work to accomplish in these end times. Do not be distracted by looking for angels (or hunting for demons). Just realize that God has approximately 100 billion angels to assist in behalf of the Church!

The presence of the angelic host before the throne of God is further proof that the Church has been caught up to heaven. Angels are on divine assignment in behalf of the righteous on earth. If the Church were still on earth, the angels would not be in heaven.

## **SUMMARY**

Surrounding God, John has seen a great rainbow, the twenty-four elders

who represent the crystal sea (the Church), and the Holy Spirit. Like the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit resides both in heaven on the throne and within each believer.

His priority assignment, however, is an earthly one. In the scene John describes, the Holy Spirit, having completed one phase of His assignment concerning the Church, stands with Jesus and the Church before God's throne.

John then describes the crystal sea, the four living creatures (God's cheerleaders), Jesus Christ the Lamb, and the angelic company.

Amazing as it may seem, Paul summarized Revelation, chapters 4 and 5, when he wrote:

*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

Hebrews 12:22-24

Paul speaks of: (1) the city of the living God, Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem; (2) 100 billion angels; (3) the general assembly of the Church – the firstborn registered in heaven; and (4) God the Judge and Jesus the Mediator. Paul and John are in agreement. They place the Church in heaven, not on the earth. A catching away of the Church is assured. There is too much Scripture to doubt it.

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<sup>1</sup>For additional proof, read my book entitled, *The Next Resurrection*.

<sup>2</sup>In attempting to interpret Revelation, many people place too much emphasis on numerology, pyramidology or symbolisms.

– CHAPTER 7 –

# Revelation 6

## *Earth*



In Revelation 6, we read that Jesus stands before the throne and opens six of the seven seals of the scroll He has taken from His Father’s hand.

*Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.” And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.*

*When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.*

*When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.*

*And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.”*

*When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades*

*followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.*

Revelation 6:1-8

In heaven, Jesus opens the first seal shortly after the Church is taken up. From this point, the activities of the earthly story unfold. Notice that the “*four living creatures*” [“*four beasts*” KJV], of a special angelic order, assist John with understanding.

## **THE ANTICHRIST RELEASED**

The first four seals release the horsemen often referred to as “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” They ride throughout the entire Tribulation Period.

The opening of the first seal releases the white horse with a rider. Formerly, many religious leaders and writers identified this rider as Jesus because Revelation 19:11 describes Jesus as riding a white horse. Some have reasoned that the appearing of Jesus and the Rapture will cause great confusion and crisis upon earth. They believe Jesus will, in turn, come to earth to conduct a great seven-year revival. During this time Jesus will be at work, but not in that way. During the Tribulation, Jesus is in heaven with the Church, His Body. He continues as the Chief Intercessor for those on the earth.

The rider of the white horse referred to in Revelation 6 has a bow but no arrows. A bow and arrow constitutes a lethal weapon. Having been stripped of his armor (Luke 11:21-22; Col. 2:15), Satan could only supply a bow. This also indicates further deception. We know that the white horse rider has no crown because one has to be given to him (verse 2). He has not yet conquered because “*he went out conquering and to conquer*” (Revelation 6:2).

The Scriptures always describe Jesus as using the two- edged Sword (the

Word of God), never a bow and arrow. Jesus has many crowns (Rev. 19:12). After He defeated Satan— rising victoriously over death, hell and the grave – He testified, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*” (Matt. 28:18). He demonstrated His victory for forty magnificent days. Jesus is certainly a conqueror!

The rider of Revelation 6:2 is the man destined to become the Antichrist. During the first 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years of his term, he is not identified as the Antichrist, but as a great world diplomat.

*Although the Bible hides the Antichrist’s personal identity (the second unknown of Revelation), it reveals other things about him.* We know his nature, his characteristics and the source of his power and authority. We know his plan, the way in which he will attempt to carry it out, and the end results. Rather than trying to identify the Antichrist, watch for the system that produces him. Revelation 13 and 17 vividly describe that system.

Both Revelation 6:1-2 and Daniel 9:24-27 teach that the opening of the first seal releases the Antichrist to begin his satanic assignment. Daniel states that at the beginning of the week, or the seven-year Tribulation Period, the Antichrist enters into an agreement with Israel. Supported by nations within a vast European-Mediterranean system, he is attempting to propel himself into the position of world dictator. Because Israel has just conquered Russia, the Antichrist needs Israel’s favor to increase in power. But after 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years, at mid- Tribulation, he breaks his agreement with Israel.

Paul’s teachings recorded in Second Thessalonians 2:1-9 harmonize with those of Revelation and Daniel. Paul teaches that the man of sin cannot be revealed to begin his activity until that which hinders [“*restrains*” verse 7] him is taken out of the way. Today on earth, the true Church energized by the Holy Ghost holds back Satan’s best plan. Once the true Church is caught up to meet Jesus when He appears in the air, the last remaining hindrance to Satan’s plan is removed. Then the Antichrist comes forth quickly.

As the pieces continue to fit together, we see further confirmation that at

the beginning of the Tribulation Period, when Jesus opens the first seal, the true Church is already before God's throne.

Some prophecy teachers teach that the "withholder" [*"what is restraining"* verse 6] of Satan's plan is the Holy Spirit. Based on such teaching, the Holy Spirit would be removed at the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

Please observe the prophecy of Joel chapter 2, reiterated by the apostle Peter in Acts chapter 2, beginning with verse 16. Both the prophet and the apostle agree that once the Holy Spirit begins being poured out, the outpouring continues until the day the sun becomes black and the moon as blood. According to Jesus in Matthew 24:29, this event affecting the sun and moon occurs at the end of the Tribulation. Joel 2:28-31 supports this statement made by Jesus. We know by the prophecy of Joel, the statement of Jesus, and the teaching of Peter in Acts 2, that the Holy Spirit is here throughout the seven years of Tribulation.

Since the Holy Spirit is not removed so the Antichrist can be revealed, who is the "withholder" that must be removed?

There can be only one choice: the true Church, that company of born-again followers of Jesus. This company, called *the Church*, is also identified by the apostle Paul *as the Body of Christ*. One can only conclude, according to Second Thessalonians 2:1-12, that the Church must be caught away so that the Antichrist can be revealed. This is the second biblical reason for the removal of the Church. The first one is found in First Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9-10. (See also Rom. 5:8-9; Col. 3:4; I John 3:2-3.)

## **THE MAN OF WAR**

The opening of the second seal releases a rider on a red horse – the man of war given power to take peace from the earth. His release clearly establishes that war will take place during the Tribulation.

The man's first action is to disrupt the peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors by sending Russia from the north. This fulfills prophecy in Ezekiel 38. Ezekiel places this battle, which brings about the total destruction of Russia, at the beginning of the Tribulation (Ezek. 39:9).

Russia's destruction removes a major opposition to the Antichrist. Because the world has been without true peace for generations, the stage is set for the Antichrist's attempt to carry out his commission from Satan to conquer the world. (Rev. 13:2, 7.)

Incidentally, the Russian Christians will have escaped destruction by reason of the Rapture. They have as much right as other Christians to these words of Jesus: "*Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man*" (Luke 21:36).

Many Christians believe that under the Antichrist— a pseudo-man of peace — there is no war. However, we have discovered that the Antichrist has a man of war at his disposal: the rider of the red horse. The Antichrist is a man of destruction, but is known as a man of peace strictly because of his ability to deceive. In an insurrection against him, the Antichrist destroys three of the original ten nations which support him (Dan. 7:8, 24). His followers say he destroys wonderfully. By peace he destroys many (Dan. 8:24-25; see also Dan. 11:21, 24).

All attempts made by evil men to conquer the world have failed. The Antichrist will also fail. Jesus is the only one who will ever rule the world and bring peace.

Research world history from biblical times until now and discover how many different men have attempted to conquer the world. All were ungodly and failed miserably. Satan himself cannot take the earth from God, so he keeps looking for the right human, one whom he can use to attempt this theft (Ps. 24:1).

## FAMINE

The opening of the third seal releases the black horse and rider: *famine*. Famine does not mean there is no food, but a serious shortage of food during the Tribulation. Such conditions are always the results of tremendous upheavals of nature and protracted wars.

Although there is widespread famine in the European- Mediterranean area, no worldwide famine is prophesied (Rev. 6:6). Note the words “*Do not harm the oil and the wine.*” Oil and wine symbolize staples, not famine.

We know that during the Tribulation some nations will still have food because the remnant of Israel is hidden in an area with an ample food supply (Rev. 12:14).

## DEATH

The opening of the fourth seal releases the pale horse whose rider is Death. With him rides an evil companion: “*Hades followed with him*” (Rev. 6:8). Over the seven years of the Tribulation, these Four Horsemen have authority or power over **only one-fourth of the earth**. From this reference, along with Isaiah 19, Daniel 11:25, 30, 32, 40-41, 44; Zechariah 14; and Revelation 9, we know the Antichrist will never rule the world. Only the European-Mediterranean area comes under the Antichrist’s influence. However, there is much destruction and death caused by these Four Horsemen. No wonder the Scripture says that hell enlarges itself (Isa. 5:14). A great number of people unprepared to meet God will be destroyed during the Tribulation.

Revelation 6:8 cancels the traditional theological teaching of a one-world government ruled by the Antichrist. **Only one-fourth of the earth is controlled by the Antichrist.** The area under his influence is the European, Middle Eastern, and North African Regions. This includes the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas.

## THE TRIBULATION MARTYRS

The opening of the fifth seal reveals the martyrs of the Tribulation.

*When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.*

*And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

*Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*

Revelation 6:9-11

These martyrs are not part of the Church Age which has already ended with Jesus' appearing and the catching up of the Church. Here is our first evidence that many people will be saved during the Tribulation.

The teaching that martyrdom is the only way for someone who misses the Rapture to be saved during the Tribulation is erroneous. Paul says, "*Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing*" (I Cor. 13:3).

There is no salvation in becoming a martyr, even when doing it in the name of the Lord. Only a small number of the group saved during the Tribulation face martyrdom. Those saved during the first 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years are not faced with martyrdom as are those who are saved in the second half of the Tribulation. However, those who are martyred will cry out for vengeance. Only when the False Prophet has introduced the mark of the Beast and idolatry does martyrdom occur (Rev. 20:4). Therefore, there is martyrdom

only in the second half of the Tribulation.

God tells them to remain at rest under the great altar before His throne until their company becomes complete. At that time He will avenge all of them at once. When the Two Witnesses, serving in Jerusalem for 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years, have been put to death by the Antichrist, the company of martyrs will be complete. The Two Witnesses are slain 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> days before the end of the Tribulation. The martyrs are avenged by Armageddon and resurrected to reign with Christ on earth.

## NATURE'S UPHEAVAL

The opening of the sixth seal releases a tremendous upheaval of nature.

*I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.*

*Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.*

*And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"*

Revelation 6:12-16

There is a great earthquake, the sun becomes black as sackcloth of hair, the moon red as blood, and the stars of heaven fall. The upheaval affects even the mountains and islands.

All people on earth are able to see the Father, sitting on the throne, and the

Lamb. The wrath of the Lamb falls: *“For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:17).

The rapid and progressive development of technology, as prophesied in Daniel 12:4, has placed the Hubble Space Telescope in the heavens. Now that this telescope is operating at full power, man has the ability to peer into infinity.

Without such a powerful instrument, man with his natural sight could not see that far. The eye is an absolutely marvelous part of the body, but an airplane can fly out of our sight range in only a matter of seconds.

The Hubble Space Telescope connected to downlinks and television will allow men to see into heaven once the sky is rolled back. Isaiah 34:4 and Revelation 6:14 reveal the sky to be tangible; therefore, it can be rolled up as a scroll. Once the sky is rolled up, or parted, heaven is visible. Men will know by the expression on God’s face that they are in trouble and will be running for a hiding place.

In Matthew 24:29 we read another description of the same event:

*“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”*

Jesus made the above statement in response to His disciples’ question, *“What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”* (Matt. 24:3).

The upheaval occurs on the final, and worst, day of the Tribulation Period. Jesus departs heaven, returns to earth and stands on the Mount of Olives, beginning His activities. The armies of the Antichrist are destroyed in the Battle of Armageddon. Jesus conquers the governments on the earth and begins His 1,000-year reign of peace.

Notice that these events occur when Jesus returns in His wrath to conquer

and rule the world, not when He appears to receive the Church. The results of the opening of this seal are reserved for the final day of Tribulation.

– CHAPTER 8 –

# Revelation 7

## *Informational*



Revelation 7 interrupts the story of the events taking place on earth to inform us of God's activities. Contrary to what some people think, God does not turn the seven years over to Satan and the Antichrist. During this time, God performs in all His greatness and love for mankind.

At the start of the Tribulation, the Church is caught up. God in His mercy creates a powerful vehicle to replace it. The 144,000 Jewish evangelists, introduced in Revelation 7, begin their ministry. God gives Israel a great victory over Russia in one day (Ezek. 38). These remove the temporary blindness from the Israelis' eyes, again restoring them to the God of Abraham (Romans 11:25-26).

Taking over the assignment of the Church, the 144,000 preach the Gospel. A seal of God provides them with divine immunity, causing their ministry to be so effective that a great multitude of people are converted to Jesus. When God translates those converts into His presence, He spares them from the wrath of the Antichrist at mid-Tribulation.

### **THE 144,000 JEWISH EVANGELISTS**

*After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.*

*Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to*

*whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”*

Revelation 7:1-3

Reflecting godly order, the angel of verse 2 verbally restrains the four angels of Revelation 8 from releasing plagues upon the earth until after the 144,000 are sealed and carry out their public ministry.

The 144,000 are identified as servants of God. One serves God by carrying out a divine assignment. Obedience is a characteristic of a servant of God. Disobedience certainly does not serve God or man. The effective ministry of the 144,000 is evidence that they preach the Gospel.

Why call them evangelists? Paul writes to Timothy and makes this statement: *“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”* (II Tim. 4:5). One does not have to be called as an evangelist to do the work of one. All believers, including the 144,000, are to carry out the instructions of Jesus in Mark 16:15. Since God’s Word never changes, it is the same for believers during the Tribulation as today.

Paul further states plainly that no one can believe and accept Christ unless someone is sent to him:

*For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*

*And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!”*

Romans 10:13-15

According to Romans 11:25-26, “*All Israel will be saved.*” By using the means described in Romans 10, the 144,000 are to bring all Israel to salvation. In addition, the many Gentiles are saved as well.

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”””*

Zechariah 8:23

## **THE 144,000 ARE SEALED**

*And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.*

Revelation 7:4

John then lists 12,000 sealed of each of the twelve tribes, which totals 144,000. Two of the tribes named are different from those listed in the original twelve of the Old Testament. The tribes of Dan and Ephraim lost their inheritance through idolatry. It is true that all the tribes fell into idolatry, but Dan and Ephraim were more rebellious than any of the others. In their place God substitutes the tribes of Levi (out of which the priesthood comes) and Joseph. The remnants of Dan and Ephraim will eventually be cared for through the goodness of the other tribes.

Revelation 14 completes the description of the 144,000:

*Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.*

*And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists*

*playing their harps.*

*They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.*

*These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.*

*And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

Revelation 14:1-5

The 144,000 are redeemed men of the earth. Approximately four years after the Tribulation begins, these servants of God finish their assignment. Revelation 9 shows us that the 144,000 are still on earth just past mid-Tribulation point. After that, they are not mentioned. Jesus meets them at Mount Zion (part of Jerusalem) and immediately escorts them to God's throne. Learning the new song of the redeemed, they join in singing with the Church company. They arrive in time to be part of the great wedding ceremony.

The 144,000 are saved through the ministry of an angel. (See Ezek. 9; Rev. 7:3.)<sup>1</sup> They are among those gathered to defend Israel against the great northern power.

Following the quick victory, they return to the temple mount. With a writer's inkhorn by his side, the angel selects and seals them from among the crowd.

The 144,000 are the "*firstfruits to God and to the Lamb*" (Rev. 14:4). The word *firstfruits* identify these Jewish evangelists as being the first to be saved

at the beginning of the Tribulation.

Having a tremendous task to perform in a limited amount of time, the 144,000 are unmarried. They must carry the simple Gospel message wherever the people of Israel have been dispersed so that all Israel may be saved. Family responsibilities would prevent them from giving themselves totally to their assignment.

The descendants of Abraham are *Israel*. To say that the Church has taken the place of Israel violates Paul's teachings. Paul distinctly distinguishes between the natural seed of Abraham (the nation of Israel) and the spiritual seed (the Church). (See Rom. 11.)

Paul admonishes the wild olive branch, the spiritual seed, not to boast over having been grafted into the olive tree. God, Who grafted it in, is also able to again graft in the broken-off natural branch, Israel, when she ceases from her unbelief.

The most difficult part of the Tribulation is the second half. During the first half, the man destined to be the Antichrist tries to sell himself as a man of peace. At mid- Tribulation he becomes extremely frustrated with the people of Israel who, except for a small remnant, have given their lives to Jesus. The Antichrist breaks his agreement and turns to destroy them. Some of the converts suffer martyrdom, while most escape the threats of the Antichrist when they are taken to heaven.

## **THE GREAT MULTITUDE**

Revelation 7 describes the mid-Tribulation catching up of the Great Multitude, the converts of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists:

*After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud*

voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

*All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”*

*Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?” And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.*

*“They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

Revelation 7:9-17

Before the throne of God, John observes the Great Multitude composed of people from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues. Basically, they are Jewish among a huge multitude of converted Gentiles. (See Zech. 8:23.) They hold palm leaves, speak of the salvation of their God and the Lamb, and “*come out of the great tribulation*” (Rev. 7:14), having known much suffering upon the earth. They worship the Lord day and night in His temple and clean their white robes, previously blemished, only by washing them in the blood of the Lamb. The 144,000 had to explain this cleansing and lead them in worship of the Lamb (Rom. 10:13-15).

Revelation 7:9-17 reveals the Great Multitude is composed of the converts

of 144,000's extremely successful ministry.

Matthew 25 contains the parable of the ten wise and foolish virgins. All the virgins had the same opportunity; all arose when the cry was made, "*Behold, the bridegroom is coming*" (verse 6). But the lamps of the foolish started going out because they had not brought sufficient oil. The difference between the wise and foolish virgins is that the foolish ones had not kept themselves ready for the event which they knew was coming. While they were gone to prepare themselves, the Bridegroom came. The wise went with Him into the marriage chamber, and the door was shut (Matt. 25:1-10).

Backsliders and lukewarm Christians will not be ready for Jesus' appearing; therefore, they will miss the catching up of the Church. Today, the Holy Spirit is working so mightily, thousands of Gentile backsliders are daily returning to God. The few believers who miss the Rapture can be caught up with the Great Multitude, provided they too have accepted the ministry of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists.

The company of Revelation 7 differs considerably from the Church company of Revelation 4 and 5. Jesus meets the Church in the air. At the rapture of the Great Multitude, the dead are not resurrected. Once the multitude arrives in heaven, God hides away the remnant of unsaved Israel to prevent its destruction by the Antichrist. The members of the Church have crowns of gold, sit upon thrones and sing the new song. None of this applies to the Great Multitude. The members of the Church declare themselves to be kings and priests reigning with the Lord, whereas those of the Great Multitude (both Jews and Gentiles) identify themselves as servants.

Revelation 7 gives us tremendous insight into God's plan for the Jews during the first half of the Tribulation. God continues to keep His Word for both the natural seed of Abraham and Gentile believers.

The 144,000 Jewish servants of God are carrying out the remaining 70th week of God's determined plan for Israel, as prophesied by Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27).

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<sup>1</sup>The battle of Ezekiel 9 is contingent upon the restoration of the state of Israel. In Ezekiel's time, Israel was in captivity. She did not exist between 608 B.C. and May, 1948.

– CHAPTER 9 –

# Revelation 8

## Four Plagues Released

### *Earth*



Revelation 8 begins with mid-Tribulation, picking up the story of earth from Revelation 6.

### EVENTS AT MID-TRIBULATION

With the events occurring in heaven and on earth during the first half of the Tribulation Period, God's master performance is underway. He has put on quite a show, destroying Russia and sparing Israel. The 144,000 Jewish evangelists are on a worldwide soul-winning crusade. All Israel and an innumerable company of Gentiles are being saved.

The Antichrist, a talented, resourceful and capable person, has been busy preparing to make his move toward world conquest by mid-Tribulation. Although he began with all the prefabricated components of his vehicle, the Antichrist has had the difficult task of putting them together. Beginning with the support of ten nations, he has had only forty-two months to combine their governments' commercial, military and religious departments.

At mid-Tribulation, the Antichrist is already badly beaten. Expansion of the satanic empire is becoming difficult; internal problems are critical. Three of the original nations, or horns, have revolted. (According to Daniel 7, the Antichrist will uproot and replace them with three other nations. We know his effort is successful because ten national armies are following him at the Battle of Armageddon.) Satan is furious and the Antichrist frustrated.

Ten major events occur or begin at mid-Tribulation and cover only a few days. (Daniel 9:27 and Revelation 7:9-17; 11:2-3 establish the time frame for these events.)

1. Antichrist breaks his agreement with Israel (Dan. 9:27).
2. Tribulation saints are caught up (Rev. 7:9-17).
3. An earthquake occurs (Rev. 8:5).
4. Through the Antichrist, Satan makes war against Israel; remnant of Israel is hidden away (Dan. 9; Rev. 12:13-17).
5. Antichrist destroys religious system (Rev. 17:16-18).
6. Antichrist holds press conference from Jerusalem (II Thess. 2:4).
7. False Prophet introduces mark of the Beast (Rev. 13:16-18).
8. Two Witnesses begin ministry (Rev. 11).
9. Angels begin ministry to all nations (Rev. 14).
10. Plagues begin (Rev. 8-9). Controlled by the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:6).

The Antichrist breaks the agreement he made with Israel at the beginning of the seven years and makes war against her, intending to destroy both the converted Jews and other saints. From this point, activities build toward a mighty crescendo, which takes place on the final day of the Tribulation.

The converts of the 144,000 escape the wrath of Satan and the Antichrist when God briefly delays the invasion with an earthquake.<sup>1</sup> This provides time for Him to simply “snatch” the converts from the Antichrist’s path and place them before His throne. At the same time, the yet-unsaved remnant of Israel is whisked into hiding for the next 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years.

The Antichrist’s armies invade Israel and take over Jerusalem where the Antichrist establishes his headquarters.

At a worldwide press conference televised via satellite, the Antichrist is seen and heard by all. He introduces the False Prophet, who ushers in the

mark of the Beast and idolatry through worship of the Beast's image. Then the Antichrist makes his historical statement: "I am God" (II Thess. 2:4).

The Two Witnesses (the prophets of God introduced in Rev. 11), among the observers in Jerusalem, immediately challenge the Antichrist. They use supernatural fire to consume the security men who have surged toward them. Via television, the world has seen that the Antichrist has no power over the two prophets of God.

Angels have begun vocally warning all nations not to receive the mark of the Beast nor worship his image. They also preach the everlasting Gospel. The "new god" has no power over the angels. Supernatural opposition confronts the Antichrist throughout the seven years of Tribulation, about which he can do nothing. As you have seen in the first half, the opposition comes from the 144,000 Jewish servants of God. While in the second half, he is confronted by the ministry of angels and the two anointed prophets.

The four angels of Revelation 8 sound their trumpets, releasing the plagues of God's wrath. The news media reports the cataclysmic effects of these plagues on the earth, sun, moon and stars. The Antichrist cannot control nature.

The world wonders, "What kind of god is this fellow?" He cannot overcome two men, nor control the angels or nature. These developments further hinder the Antichrist's attempts to carry out his assignment.

## **EARTH'S STORY CONTINUES**

As Revelation 8 begins, the scene unfolds in heaven in preparation for the continuation of earthly events. The seventh seal is opened:

*"When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour."*

Revelation 8:1

*The half-hour space of silence in heaven is the third unknown of Revelation. The awesomeness of the things about to usher in the last half of the Tribulation Period could inspire the silence. However, any attempt to explain would be speculation. Again, we will have to wait and see what this unknown means.*

The angels are given their trumpets:

*And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.*

*And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.*

Revelation 8:2-5

The first four angels sound their trumpets releasing the plagues:

*So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.*

*The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.*

*Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.*

*Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven,*

*burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.*

*Then the fourth angel sounded: 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 were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.*

*And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”*

Revelation 8:6-13

The plagues are controlled by the Two Witnesses who use them against the Antichrist throughout the last half of the Tribulation as they deem it necessary.

With the sounding of the first trumpet comes fire and hail mingled with blood. This kind of rain falls in many places during the last half of the Tribulation destroying green grass and one-third of the trees.<sup>2</sup> Many homes and commercial buildings will also be destroyed by reason of this plague.

When the second trumpet sounds, a third of the oceans (“sea” verse 8) become blood in the European-Mediterranean area. Ships caught, sink; and all aboard perish. By the end of the Two Witnesses’ ministry, even people living inland will be affected as a third of the sea becomes blood.

When the third trumpet sounds, a great star falls, poisoning one-third of the sources of domestic waters. Those people who drink from these waters die. This could destroy many in large metropolitan areas.

When the fourth trumpet sounds, a third of the moon, sun and stars are

immediately darkened. They give no light for one-third of the day and night.

During the Tribulation, the major form of religion will be witchcraft, which involves astrology. The already alarming increase in today's use of witchcraft is only a forerunner of what will come. The sudden plague upon the heavenly bodies will place astrologers in a state of confusion and drastically affect those people who look to astrology for guidance, placing them in an even worse state of confusion.

Verse 13 warns that there are three woes to come, each worse than any of the plagues released by the sounding of the first four trumpets.

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<sup>1</sup>Although severe, this upheaval of nature is not to be compared with the intensity of the final upheaval of Revelation 6 occurring on the Tribulation's last day.

<sup>2</sup>There will also be natural rain. From reading Revelation 12:14 we know that the area where the Israeli remnant is hidden is free from the effects of the plagues. Since the plagues controlled by the Two Witnesses are not worldwide, natural rain will also continue.

– CHAPTER 10 –

# Revelation 9

## Fifth and Sixth Woes Released

### *Earth*



#### THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

At the sound of the fifth trumpet, a plague of demon- controlled locusts begins.

*Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.*

*They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.*

Revelation 9:1-5

The locusts are commanded not to harm the grass of the earth. We know that the first plague has not run its course, or there would be no grass for the locusts to hurt. Since the locusts are instructed to hurt only the men who do

not have the seal of God on their foreheads, we know that the 144,000 are still on the earth ministering after mid-Tribulation. (Sometime later, they are met by Jesus at Mount Zion and taken up to God's throne.)

Beginning shortly after mid-Tribulation, this plague covers a five-month period and is not repeated. During this time the remnant of Israel, who has not yet accepted Christ, is hidden away and ministered to by the 144,000. Through their ministry, all this remnant will be saved (Rev. 12:17). I am confident that all other born-again followers of Jesus will also be spared this awful plague. The Word shows us that our God of mercy knows how to protect and deliver His own, and that He reserves His wrath for His enemies (Nah. 1:2).

During this five-month period, there will be no death. *“In those days men will seek death and will not find it”* (Revelation 9:6).

Since death became a reality through the fall of Adam, this is the only occasion in all of God's Word that it takes a holiday.

Men will suffer the torment of the scorpion-like sting of the locusts for five months. The great suffering will cause men to attempt suicide. Whatever they do that would normally result in death will only add to their torment until the five-month period closes.

This is the result of people's determination to live their own way in spite of warnings from God. They have ignored God's love by rejecting Jesus and turning their ears away from the wooing of the Holy Spirit until finally God has no choice but to allow them to go their own way. As the Scripture says, *“Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies”* (Prov. 1:31). These horrible things happen not as a result of the will of God for anyone, but as a result of sin and rebellion against God.

*The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were*

*like the faces of men. They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth.*

*And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle.*

*They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months.*

*And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon. One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.*

#### Revelation 9:7-12

The smoke from the bottomless pit causes severe air pollution. People are helpless to defend themselves against the sting of the locusts.

Some people state, "We believe these locusts represent jet aircraft which have horrible firepower." Have you ever seen an airplane eating grass and leaves off the trees? John's description of the locusts as insects corresponds with an ancient reference found under "locusts" in most encyclopedias. These locusts are literal insects commanded to attack the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

We should not try to spiritualize everything. Use this law for interpreting God's Word: interpret Holy Scripture literally unless there is a clear figure of speech used within the context. Only then can you use figurative interpretation.

The name of the king over the locusts in both the Hebrew and Greek means "destruction" and "destroyer." One "woe" is past and two more are to come.

One must keep in mind these plagues are designed and released against the Antichrist and the areas under his control.

## **THE AWESOME ARMY**

As the sixth trumpet sounds, four angels bound at the river Euphrates are released:

*Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."*

Revelation 9:13-14

The angels who rebelled with Satan against God were exiled to earth and bound in chains of darkness (Jude 6). These four angels of verse 14 are part of that company of fallen angels.

*So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.*

Revelation 9:15

These four angels are given a fixed period of one year, one month, one day, and one hour in which to operate. During that time, they create a vehicle through which they will destroy one-third of the people in their path. That vehicle is an awesome army of 200 million men equipped with weapons of tremendous military firepower.

*Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.*

*By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed— by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.*

Revelation 9:16-19

These are not natural horses that John describes. They have heads like lions out of which come massive destruction. John is describing a military vehicle with awesome firepower that has taken the place of the horse, the most outstanding mode for army transportation in his day. The horse has long since been replaced by powerful, swift, armored vehicles.

## **THE ORIGIN OF THE ARMY**

Revelation 16 also relates the story of earth. In comparing the verses which describe the sounding of the sixth trumpet in Revelation 9 and the pouring out of the sixth bowl [“vial” KJV] here in Revelation 16:12, we see that both events involve the great river Euphrates:

*Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.*

Revelation 16:12

The kings of the East are from the Orient. Matthew 2:1-12 refers to the “wise men from the East” who followed a star<sup>1</sup> to find and worship the Christ child. King Herod asked the wise men when it was that they first saw the star. From this information, Herod knew to order the death of all the children in Bethlehem two years old and under (verse 16.) Considering the length of time, the distance eastward from Bethlehem places the wise men in the Far East – the Orient.<sup>2</sup>

Only the Orient can produce a 200 million-man army. In December of

1971 the late Chou En-lai, formerly premier and foreign minister of China, declared that China had the potential of fielding a 200 million-man army – the figure specified in Revelation 9!

When the Japanese-Chinese war (begun in the 1930s) officially ended in 1973, the way was paved for diplomatic relationship to be restored between Japan and China. An Oriental federation of nations could easily field an army of 200 million.

The combination of the enormous Chinese population with the industrial ability of the Japanese could create a formidable military machine. The time frame of one year, one month, one day and one hour begins with the twelfth month of the Tribulation's sixth year.<sup>3</sup> In twelve of the thirteen months designated, the 200 million-man army sweeps through Asia to the river Euphrates destroying everything in its path with tremendous firepower. Meeting with some resistance in the world's most-populated areas of Asia, the army destroys one-third of the population of the nations through which it passes.

Russia and China are enemies. Having two fronts, Russia is afraid of China.<sup>4</sup> The Pakistani-Indian war of the last two weeks of December, 1971, was actually a bid for power in Asia between Russia and China. Although Russia lost the war, she won the round.

Diplomatically striving to reach goals they had been unable to achieve militarily, the Chinese had hung up their swords. If they had taken them back down, they would have ruined their initial diplomatic maneuvering.

Having recently been admitted to the United Nations, the Chinese were anxious to prove themselves. They had to lose the round even though the Pakistanis were horribly crushed by the Russian-backed Indian nation. The Chinese have not forgotten their slap in the face over the event.

When Russia is defeated by Israel, China is pleased. But in her westward attack, she punishes India in Russia's stead. Pray not only for the Chinese and

other Orientals who will suffer great losses during the Tribulation, but also for the Indians. Ask God to send a great spiritual revival to India so that many will be swept into His kingdom and escape this terrible destruction. We must do everything God tells us to reach the billions who must be brought into His kingdom. Only Jesus can provide them with an escape from future-prophesied events.

Early in the last month of the seventh year of the Tribulation, the Oriental army arrives at the then-dry river Euphrates. The army crosses and turns south into the nation of Israel. In that final month, its members gather into the Valley of Megiddo which stretches into the plains of the Valley of Jezreel, the site for the Battle of Armageddon.

The European and Mediterranean armies, under the leadership of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, also gather for the Battle of Armageddon.

The Oriental army is under the command of fallen angels, not of the Antichrist. The Orientals are on a collision course with the Antichrist, both forces attempting world conquest. When they discover a common foe – Jesus Christ – they combine forces to resist His return. Of course, their defeat is inevitable. On the final day of the Tribulation, the Orientals and the armies of the Antichrist are destroyed in one hour. This accounts for the last month, one day and one hour.

## **THE FOUR CATEGORIES OF LAWLESSNESS**

The last verses of Revelation 9 list the major categories of lawlessness occurring during the Tribulation:

*But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their **murders** or their **sorceries** or their **sexual immorality** or their **thefts**.*

1. **MURDER.** There will be no regard for life.
2. **SORCERY.** Witchcraft – sorcery in its most sophisticated and devastating form – coupled with drug use will be the religion. People will follow astrology and attend seances. They will demand the services of spiritual mediums to communicate with the dead, clairvoyants and magicians. These things are abominations to God and are forbidden in His Word. (See Lev. 19-20; Deut. 18; Isa. 47:12-14.)

Any occult activity is pseudoscience, a deceptive operation of Satan to camouflage the extremely destructive practice of witchcraft.

3. **SEXUAL IMMORALITY** [*“fornication”* KJV]. There will be no regard for one’s morals or for one’s private person.
4. **THEFT.** No one’s private property will be respected. Today, lawlessness and preoccupation with the occult are already prevalent. During the Tribulation it will be incredibly worse. Pray for your family, neighbors and the people with whom you work. Pray for your country and its leaders, whether or not you agree with their views.

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<sup>1</sup>The star seen by the wise men, who were astronomers, is the first GPS (global positioning system).

<sup>2</sup>I believe that God created the star for the express purpose of enabling the people from the Orient to find and worship the King of the Jews. The wise men and their attendants were the only ones who saw the star. It is human nature to be curious. If the entire world had seen the star, the following would have been huge. Surely Herod would have learned of the star had it been visible to others.

<sup>3</sup>According to Revelation 16:12, the armies of the kings of the East are destroyed at Armageddon. Therefore, we can determine that they left the Far East thirteen months before. After traveling overland for one year, they cross the Euphrates into Israel during the last month of the Tribulation. (This same

distance took the kings of Matthew 2 approximately two years, traveling by beast of burden, to follow the special star on their way to worship Him Who was born King of the Jews. The vast modern army will, along the way, meet and destroy opposition, and still arrive at the site of Armageddon in one year.) On the last day they, along with the armies of the Antichrist, are destroyed in one hour.

<sup>4</sup>China will never be militarily involved with Russia (and is no present threat to the U.S.). There are no prophetic statements showing China and Russia at war, and China is presently unprepared for global warfare.

# Part IV



**The Prophecy**  
**Revelation 10-15, 17**

# *Informational Chapters*

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– CHAPTER 11 –

# Revelation 10 and 11

## *Informational*



Because the informational chapters include descriptions of past events, the details of the stories of heaven and earth contained in them are not always chronologically arranged. Keep this in mind as we study the following informational chapters 10-15 and 17.

### REVELATION 10

### THE FOURTH UNKNOWN

A collection of miscellaneous information, Revelation 10 opens with a reference to seven thunders:

*I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.*

*He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.*

*Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.”*

Revelation 10:1-4

We do not know what the voices of the seven thunders stated or released. When John was about to reveal this, a voice from heaven stopped him.

We do not know what happened after they spoke. Several references to God “thundering” appear in the Old Testament. For example: “*The Lord thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them*” (I Sam. 7:10). God’s thundering threw His adversaries into such chaos that they often destroyed themselves.

We cannot speculate as to whether these references provide any insight into the effects of the voices of Revelation 10. *The meaning of the seven thunders is the fourth unknown of Revelation.*

## **THE TIME OF THE TRIBULATION'S END**

When the Tribulation has run its course, it will end. Revelation 10 continues:

*The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay [“time” KJV] no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.*

Revelation 10:5-7

The mighty angel says, “*That there should be time no longer*” (KJV). He is not announcing that “time” will end, but that the “seven years of Tribulation” will end. When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet (Rev. 11:15), the last day of the Tribulation Period begins. It is then that “*the mystery of God would be finished.*”

The Tribulation will not be drawn out. For some people that is good news.

## CONSUMING THE WORD

We know that Jesus and the Word are one: “*In the beginning*” [before all time] *was the Word* (Christ), *and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself*” (John 1:1, AMP).

Jesus often spoke of the Word’s importance, even calling Himself (the Word) the Bread of Life. The Early Church held the belief that the Word was to be spiritually consumed by and absorbed into the spiritual, or inner, man.

Revelation 10 continues the parallel of the Word as sustenance:

*Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, “Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.”*

*So I went to the angel and said to him, “Give me the little book.” And he said to me, “Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.”*

*Then I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.*

Revelation 10:8-10

As far as can be determined, the “*little book*” is the Word of God. Following the angel’s instructions, John eats it. In his mouth it was as sweet as honey, but in his belly – his innermost being – it was bitter.

When you first encounter the Word after coming to Jesus, you find simple beauty, filled with wonder and sweetness. In those elementary days, you can hardly wait to tell everybody about it.

After a while, you necessarily start growing in the things of God. The Word begins affecting you, bringing you into the likeness of Jesus' mature stature. You have switched diets from the milk to the meat of the Word. The Word is not always as sweet, but is equally as nourishing. Consider Jeremiah 15:16 and John 6:33-35 for identification of the little book.

## **THE FIFTH UNKNOWN**

According to verse 11, John has an assignment to be fulfilled in the future:

*And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."*

When John received the prophecy, he was in his nineties and exiled on the isle of Patmos. We have no record of any other ministry after that time. *When will John have a ministry? As it is future, we will wait and see. This is the fifth unknown of Revelation.*

## **REVELATION 11 THE TWO WITNESSES**

Revelation 11 provides insight into the Two Witnesses' ministry in Jerusalem during the last half of the Tribulation.

## **LENGTH OF THE MINISTRY**

*Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months."*

Revelation 11:1-2

The "forty-two months," exactly 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years, covers the last half of the

Tribulation Period.<sup>1</sup> The man of sin will have broken his agreement with Israel and established his headquarters in the temple of Jerusalem (Dan. 9:27; II Thess. 2:4).

*“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”*

Revelation 11:3

The number of days, 1260, is exactly forty-two months or 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years. Time during the Tribulation is based on the prophetic calendar year of 360, not 365, days to the year.<sup>2</sup> This is the reason that the seven years are equally divided into halves of exactly 1,260 days.

## **THEIR IDENTITY**

Who are the Two Witnesses? Enoch and the apostle John, Elijah or Moses? Joshua and Zerubbabel? None of these? Let us examine the possibilities.

The Two Witnesses have future ministry. Both outstanding prophets, John and Elijah, meet this specification. Of John, Revelation 10:11 states: *“And he said to me, ‘You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.’”*

The beloved apostle John leaned upon the Lord’s breast (John 13:23). In addition to the book of Revelation, he wrote the great love letter, *The Gospel According to St. John*, and three more love epistles. He was the only one of the twelve disciples to die a natural death.

Of Elijah, Malachi 4:5 states: *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”*

When Elijah prayed on Mount Carmel, supernatural fire consumed his sacrifice (I Kings 18:22-38). When he prayed, no rain fell for 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years. (See

I Kings 17:1; 18:41-45; Luke 4:25.) He appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and Moses, another candidate (Matt. 17:2-3). Caught up bodily and alive in a whirlwind, Elijah did not see death (II Kings 2:11).

Before Elijah, Enoch did not see death. A tremendous man of faith, Enoch was also a prophet. He so pleased God that he was not found again on the earth because the Lord translated him into His presence (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5). The apostle Paul writes, *“It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”* (Heb. 9:27). Because Elijah and Enoch did not see death, they are excellent candidates. However, in the near future, the great number of us who are caught up to meet Jesus in the air will not die. This weakens the possibility of Enoch and Elijah being the witnesses.

Moses was considered the great prophet of Israel and its most outstanding leader. Exodus chapters 7 through 12 record Moses’ handling of ten plagues, including one in which he turned water into blood. As we just saw, he appeared upon the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus. Both John and Moses experienced death, which eliminates them as candidates.

Enoch and Elijah have evidence in their favor, but the ministry of Elijah was fulfilled through John the Baptist. The reincarnationists believe that John the Baptist was Elijah. John clearly establishes that he was not.

*And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”*

John 1:21

John the Baptist was sent to fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3.

*He said, “I am the ‘voice of one crying in the wilderness: make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”*

John 1:23

According to Malachi 4:5, Elijah was a forerunner of Christ. Quite evidently, John the Baptist was not Elijah but another forerunner of Christ. As the assignment of Christ is upon us today, the assignment of Elijah was upon John the Baptist. Revelation 11:4 states:

*These [the Two Witnesses] are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.*

Because the Old Testament refers to Joshua and Zerubbabel as being the “olive trees” and “lampstands” that stand before God (Zech. 4:11-14), some people have assumed these men are the Two Witnesses. However, the symbolic terminology *olive trees* and *lampstands* is applicable to any believer who on behalf of God’s children stands before God. Due to Paul’s teaching in Hebrews 9:27, we can eliminate the possibility of Joshua and Zerubbabel being the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11.

You may reason that Elijah has a place of ministry before the appearing or return of Jesus. Other people may think something else. Any opinions held on this matter are pure speculation. *No chapter or verse nails down the Two Witnesses’ identities – the sixth unknown of Revelation.*

Personally, I believe that none of the four men we have discussed is either of the Two Witnesses. God is sovereign; He raises up whom He will: “*He puts down one, and exalts another*” (Ps. 75:7). God chooses 144,000 unmarried men to serve as evangelists during the first four years of the Tribulation. Through their ministry all Israel and many Gentiles are saved. Therefore, God can choose two men out of that same period to be the Two Witnesses.

Do not believe anyone who declares, “The Lord has revealed to me the identity of the Two Witnesses.” If someone told me I was one, I would respond, “No thanks.” I am comfortable with the position that the Lord will raise up the Two Witnesses out of the Tribulation. If I am mistaken, you can nudge me and say, “Hey, Sutton, you missed it!” I will answer, “I sure did!” But by then I will not sense embarrassment because you and I will be

standing before God's throne enjoying all the heavenly ceremonies!

## **ACTIVITIES**

The Two Witnesses have great power. They are divinely immunized from all harm. They command supernatural fire to destroy anyone who attempts to come against them, and control the plagues and the rain.

*And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.*

*These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.*

Revelation 11:5-6

As we have seen, Elijah also prayed and shut off the rain for a 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> year period. The drought affected only the land of Israel. As other plagues controlled by the Two Witnesses basically affect only the European-Mediterranean area, it is likely that the same is true of the drought, the plague of rain, and hail mixed with blood.

For 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years the Two Witnesses carry out their ministry, making life more difficult for the Antichrist.

Daily they prophesy the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and number the days until the Antichrist's end in the final battle.

## **THEIR MINISTRY'S END**

*When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.*

## Revelation 11:7

The Antichrist repeatedly fails in his attempts to destroy the Two Witnesses until  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days before the end of the Tribulation. Their divine protection and use of supernatural fire are withheld, and his forces finally overcome them. Their dead bodies lie on the Jerusalem street for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days in view of the entire world via television. No one is permitted to bury or even touch their bodies.

*And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*

## Revelation 11:8

How could Jerusalem, the Holy City, ever be associated with Sodom and Egypt? The answer lies in our study of both the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Since we know the Antichrist establishes his headquarters in Jerusalem at mid-Tribulation, we begin to have understanding. Daniel 11:37 reveals several things concerning the Antichrist.

One is he has no desire for women; he is a practicing homosexual. That is the reason Jerusalem is known as Sodom in the last  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years of the Tribulation. His entrance into Jerusalem draws a crowd of followers like himself.

Furthermore, from Second Thessalonians 2:4, the apostle Paul establishes that the Antichrist announces himself as God, which confirms the last statement of Daniel 11:37. This is tantamount to idolatry for which Egypt has been known since ancient times.

Keep in mind that the False Prophet introduces the worship of the image of the Beast at a mid-Tribulation press conference. This is idolatry in its most

flagrant form. The worship of an image is Egyptian in origin.

It is the Antichrist and his followers who bring an evil identity upon the city of Jerusalem where our Lord was crucified.

*Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.*

Revelation 11:9

The followers of the Antichrist rejoice by having quite a party; but it ends quickly when, slightly before noon on the final day of the Tribulation, the Two Witnesses come back to life!

*And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.*

*Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.*

Revelation 11:10-11

This resurrection alone causes a great emotional upheaval. But then, as the world continues to watch on television, the Two Witnesses are taken up into heaven!

*And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.*

Revelation 11:12

Immediately, the most severe upheaval of nature in the earth's history,

held in reserve since the opening of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-14), occurs:

*In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth part of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand men were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

*The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.*

Revelation 11:13-14

The three woes of Revelation 8:13 involve the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets. After the completion of the second woe, the third woe comes together quickly on the final day of the Tribulation. The seventh and final angelic trumpet sounds producing the Battle of Armageddon and the series of events which end the Tribulation. Let us capsulize the events leading to the seventh angel's trumpet call.

## **EVENTS LEADING TO THE TRIBULATION'S END**

At mid-Tribulation, the Antichrist's attempt to assert himself as God triggers God's interference. The Two Witnesses challenge the Antichrist, the angels warn all nations and the plagues begin. The Antichrist's followers want an explanation for his inability to control the circumstances.

During the second half of the Tribulation, the Antichrist is contending with this interference and with rebellious nations, including Egypt.

The Antichrist succeeds in killing the Two Witnesses  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days before Jesus returns to earth. In the closing hours of the Tribulation, as armies gather for the Battle of Armageddon, the Antichrist is well aware that his hour to meet the Lord Jesus is at hand. In view of the world via television, the Two Witnesses, dead for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days, return to life and are raptured. Fear throws the Antichrist's followers into universal pandemonium! Once the witnesses have been caught up, the devastating upheaval of nature erupts.

On the final day of the Tribulation, four major classes of people remain on earth:

1. Followers of the Antichrist.
2. Unsaved people who have not accepted Jesus.
3. The saved Jewish remnant of Israel.
4. All people saved during the second half of the Tribulation, except those who have been martyred.

After the 144,000 are caught up to heaven, only the angels and the Two Witnesses minister. After the death of the witnesses, only the angels proclaim the Gospel. We know they are successful because God's Word does not return void (Isa. 55:11). However, many people continue cursing and blaspheming God. As often happens today, incomprehensible as it may seem, the suffering people do not call on God for mercy.

## **THE THIRD WOE RELEASED**

The sounding of the seventh trumpet sets in motion the remaining series of events which end the Tribulation.

*Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*

*And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned.*

*"The nations were angry, and **Your wrath** [the destruction at the Battle of Armageddon] has come, and the time of the **dead** [the righteous dead of the Tribulation Period], that they should be judged,*

*and that You should reward Your servants the **prophets** [the Two Witnesses], and the **saints** [of the Tribulation Period], and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy **those who destroy the earth**” [the Oriental army and the Antichrist’s forces].*

*Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.*

Revelation 11:15-19

Jesus takes over the world’s kingdoms. He returns to earth, then releases a great plague (described in Zechariah 14:12) on the hordes led by the Antichrist. It destroys the merged forces of the 200 million Orientals and the Antichrist’s armies at the Battle of Armageddon. The Antichrist and False Prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire and Satan into the bottomless pit, imprisoning him for 1,000 years. With this, Jesus fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6, “*the government will be upon His shoulder.*”

The righteous dead are judged for their works. The Tribulation martyrs are avenged and resurrected so that they may take their place in the earthly activities of Jesus’ 1,000-year reign and be rewarded. The Two Witnesses are rewarded. The upheaval of nature, described more explicitly in Revelation 6, ends the Tribulation. This terrible day of the Lamb’s wrath is unlike any other in history.

## **TWO DIFFERENT TRUMPETS**

Do not confuse the sounding of the seventh angelic trumpet with the last trumpet of God.

In the following two passages, Paul writes of the same trumpet. In the first passage, he calls it “*the last trumpet*”; in the second, “*the trumpet of God.*” In both references the trumpet signals the catching up of the Church – the last event of the Church Age.

*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

I Corinthians 15:51-52

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the **trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

The scriptural descriptions of the events which follow the sounding of the trumpet of God and the seventh angelic trumpet do not coincide.

The sounding of the trumpet of God described by Paul signals events relating only to the Church. Jesus appears, the dead in Christ are resurrected, and the living saints (the Church) are caught up to meet Christ in the air. The Church Age closes.

The sounding of the angelic trumpets of Revelation signals events relating only to the Tribulation Period. We have examined the events following the sounding of the seventh angelic trumpet in the previous pages of this book. With these, the Tribulation closes. Do not allow anyone to convince you that the Church Age and the Tribulation cover the same period.

## **ADDITIONAL PROOF OF PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE**

Notice that following the sound of the seventh trumpet, the Church returns to earth with Christ. (See Zech. 14:5; Rev. 17:14; 19:14.) If the Church had never gone to heaven, how could it return with Jesus?

The Church participates in the Wedding and the subsequent Marriage Supper of the Lamb. If the Church had not been taken to heaven, how could it participate in those heavenly activities?

Some people explain this by teaching that the Church is not caught up until mid-Tribulation. These people are confusing the Church with the Great Multitude (of Rev. 7) caught up at mid-Tribulation. The description of this company is not the same as that of the Church. Jesus is in heaven opening the first seal that begins the Tribulation on earth while the Church is there observing.

The Church being caught up on the final day of the Tribulation would contradict two statements of Jesus. First, of the day of His appearing to receive the glorious Church, Jesus declared, “*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only*” (Matt. 24:36).

Biblically knowledgeable people could count down the last half of the Tribulation’s 1,260 days. Should they fail to start their countdown on time, they would be informed of the day of Jesus’ return by the Two Witnesses.

Second, Jesus said: “*Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man*” (Luke 21:36).

Things that “*will come to pass*” happen in the future. If the Church were caught up on the last day of the Tribulation, it would escape the 1,000-year reign of Christ on the earth. This is additional proof that Jesus comes for the Church before the Tribulation.

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<sup>1</sup>Because the Two Witnesses' resurrection and catching up occur on the Tribulation's last day (clearly established in Rev. 11), we know that their assignment covers the Tribulation's second half. The sounding of the seventh angelic trumpet (verse 15) sets in motion the events occurring on the

Tribulation's final day. Again, this identifies the forty-two-month period of verse 2 as being the second half of the Tribulation.

<sup>2</sup>The ancient Jewish calendar allowed for thirty days to the month.

– CHAPTER 12 –

# Revelation 12

## *Informational*



This chapter is the prime example of John's adherence to the instructions of writing that which is past, present and future (Rev. 1:19). John writes the historical record in order for it to support the story of the future. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John ties together past and future events, giving us insight into the entire story of Israel and Jesus Christ in relation to Revelation.

The first five verses contain three major characters: (1) a dragon, (2) a sun-clothed woman, and (3) her male child.

*Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.*

*And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.*

Revelation 12:1-3

Verse 3 contains the first reference in Revelation to the Beast with seven crowned heads and ten horns. We will examine the meaning of these crowned heads in our discussion of Revelation 13.

## **THE DRAGON**

The identity of the dragon is clear.

*His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.*

Revelation 12:4-5

Without question, the dragon is Satan. His identity becomes completely established by the end of the twelfth chapter. However, there has been much controversy within the Church concerning the identity of the woman and the male child.

## **THE WOMAN**

Revelation 12 gives us insight into the tremendous story of the woman who brings forth the male child. Simply, “*the woman*” is *Israel* and the “*male child*” is *Jesus*.

Some people teach that the woman is the great institutional church; the male child, a special company of overcomers within it who are the Bride of Christ. They teach that only this special Bride company will be caught up to heaven.

If this is true, the institutional church, as the woman, will be provided with a special hiding place until the end of the Tribulation. This leaves no one to form the harlot church of Revelation 17.

If this teaching is true, the people in the institutional church who are not part of the special company of overcomers are the “remnant” of Revelation 12. This remnant is clearly composed of Israelis, not the “leftovers” of the institutional church. Avoid teachings which cannot be harmonized with the whole scriptural record.

Some people mistakenly identify the world's institutional religious bodies as "the Church." The teachings of both Jesus and Paul establish that the Church is the company of born again, Spirit-led followers of the Lord Jesus who keep God's Word! (Although the institutional church and the true Church are not in any way the same, the members of the Church may be associated with religious groups and are often found within them.)

A reference from the Old Testament further confirms the sun-clothed woman's identity as *Israel*. The sun, moon and eleven stars of a dream Joseph told his brothers clearly depict the household of Jacob, or Israel:

*Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."*

*So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"*

Genesis 37:9-10

## **THE MALE CHILD**

The male child of Revelation 12:5 can only be Jesus. This verse clearly states that the male child is caught up to God, to His throne, and shall rule all nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15).

The Church will also be caught up to God and will rule with Christ on earth. However, the Church gets its authority through Jesus. Furthermore, verse 4 tells us that Satan is ready to devour the male child the moment the child is born. The Church was not placed in the world to be destroyed by Satan, but to be the instrument God uses to wreck Satan's stronghold. (See Matt. 16:18; I Cor. 10; Eph. 6:10.)

We see a parallel to verse 4 in Matthew 1 and 2. In this account, Satan is greatly desiring to destroy the Christ child immediately after His birth. This again identifies the male child as *Jesus*.

## **SATAN IS NOT ALL-KNOWING**

Joseph had traveled slowly to Bethlehem because of Mary's pregnant condition. By the time they arrived, due to no fault of the innkeeper, no room was left in the inn. They were offered the next best place for warmth and protection from the elements – the stables.

Satan could not locate the Christ child. Even his number- one agent, King Herod, could not acquire the information through his astrologers, soothsayers, clairvoyants or those who dealt in witchcraft. These advisers had to refer to the prophetic Scripture to determine Jesus' birthplace as Bethlehem! Herod shared this information with the kings of the East, hoping they would learn the Christ child's location and, in turn, tell him. But when warned by God of Herod's sinister heart, the Oriental kings left Bethlehem and returned home.

After learning of their departure, Herod issued a decree for the death of all children in the Bethlehem area two years old and under. Following the instructions of an angel who appeared to him, Joseph took Mary and the Christ child to Egypt for their safekeeping. They did not return to the land of Israel until it was safe.

This account points out an outstanding truth: Satan had insufficient information to locate the Christ child! Notice how God out-foxed Satan!

Had Jesus been born in the best accommodations, Satan could have easily located Him. But Satan did not expect a child of majestic importance, destined for kingship, to be born in an inconspicuous, lowly place. From this we see that Satan is not all-knowing and omnipresent as is God. If he were, the Christ child could not have been hidden!

## THE 144,000

Some people teach that the male child of Revelation 12:5 is the 144,000 selected Jewish men. However, upon their selection the 144,000 are not set upon by Satan to be destroyed. In fact, they have divine immunization and move unhindered in their evangelism.<sup>1</sup> During this first half of the Tribulation, the man destined to be the Antichrist is fully occupied attempting to establish his domain diplomatically, politically and economically. He is in no position to act against the 144,000 Jewish evangelists. Only Jesus fits the identity of the male child with ease.

The woman is *Israel*, not the institutional church. She brings forth a male child who is caught up to God and who will rule all nations with firm authority. In the most exact biblical sense, the “woman” is *Israel* and the “male child” is *Jesus*. These simple identities totally harmonize with the entire biblical account.

The next section of Revelation 12 describes Satan’s fall.

### SATAN'S TOTAL DEFEAT SATAN CAST OUT OF HEAVEN

*And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.*

Revelation 12:7-8

The dragon was unable to destroy the male child, Jesus Christ, upon His birth!

*So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

## Revelation 12:9

When Satan was defeated and cast out of heaven, one-third of the angels fell with him. *“His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth”* (Rev. 12:4). (As we saw when studying Revelation 1:20, the word *star* often identifies angels.)

*Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.*

*“And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

*“Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”*

## Revelation 12:10-12

Some believe that Satan and his angels come and go in heaven as they please, literally approaching God’s throne and accusing the saints. Revelation 12 establishes that once cast out, Satan and the fallen angels can never return.

If this is true, the war between Michael and his angels and the Devil and his angels has not occurred, and Satan has not been cast out of heaven. This means Satan’s initial rebellion against God, when he hoped to usurp God’s authority and replace Him, continues to this day. God’s Word makes this story absolutely unacceptable. Jesus Himself declared that He saw Satan fall from heaven (Luke 10:18). Revelation 12:10 tells us that once Satan has been cast down, several events follow: salvation and spiritual life through Jesus Christ, and the beginning of God’s kingdom on earth.

If Satan still has personal access to God's throne to accuse the brethren, salvation has not come, God's kingdom on earth has not begun, and Christ's power has not manifested on earth. Therefore, we cannot overcome Satan through the blood of the Lamb or by the word of our testimonies. If true, these last five points directly contradict what the Scriptures teach is available!

God has declared that the Devil is a liar and there is no truth in him (John 8:44). Our heavenly Father would not believe Satan's story over one of His children's! The entirety of the Word reveals that God is all-knowing. When one of His children commits a disobedient act or allows temptation to draw him into sin, He knows immediately. He does not have to wait to get His information from the Devil!

God has sent the Holy Spirit, not Satan, to help man recognize his disobedient acts and restore him to fellowship. Anyone who overrides the Holy Spirit's operation leaves himself open for a vicious satanic attack.

Even though Satan is the accuser of the brethren, he cannot accuse them before God. (The only brethren Satan has ever been able to accuse before God's throne were his fellow angels before his fall.)

Satan accuses the brethren before others and themselves. He works overtime, continually inspiring Christians to find fault with each other. This prevents them from having fellowship or from working together, delaying the full formation of the Body of Christ. (See I Cor. 12.)

If Satan is unsuccessful in accusing one Christian to another, he will accuse one to himself. If you allow this to happen, he will back you into a corner, hand you his club of self-condemnation and leave you beating yourself. This frees him to find somebody else he can accuse.

Today many Christians are living under condemnation, a work of the Devil. The Holy Spirit does not bring condemnation, but conviction, which is a work of love.

Ephesians 2:2 supplies further proof that Satan has been cast out of heaven. It refers to him as the prince of the power of the air. This shows us Satan has access to the immediate heavens surrounding the earth, but not to the abode of God. Our space program has provided physical evidence attesting to this.

Space missions have probed the stratosphere into the very front yard of God. Originally, all returning astronauts underwent extensive quarantine and thorough examination for disease and contamination. Now astronauts are no longer quarantined upon their return from space because scientists have discovered that no bacteria or harmful elements of any kind exist beyond the atmosphere of the earth.

The Bible clearly reveals that Satan is the originator of sickness, disease and all evil. If he were still in the heavens, his pollution could be found there as it is on earth.

Incidentally, upon returning from space, our astronauts often declare that they have seen the glories of God. "We are more convinced than ever before of the existence of God," some have said, "for His handiwork is so evident." Not one has reported sensing any evil influence in space.

Our examination of the dragon, the sun-clothed woman, and the story of angelic warfare has made us more knowledgeable about our adversary, the Devil. Revelation 12 clearly shows that Satan and his angels have absolutely no access to heaven. It reaches into the authority of pre-existing Scriptures to give account of Satan's fall. (See the book of Genesis; Isa. 14; Ezek. 28.)

After this fall, Satan was able to upset many of God's earthly plans. Finally, God administered Satan's ultimate defeat by sending Jesus Christ to provide salvation.

Remember, Satan is not omnipresent or all-knowing; he is only a liar and an accuser. God's Word gives us the authority and effective tools of the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony to use against him. If you

have used these, you have experienced their effectiveness. Men and women abiding in God through Jesus are more than conquerors and more than a match for Satan!

No one need be devil-conscious. Just know how to recognize and deal with the adversary when he shows up. Continue being victorious in the name of the Lord.

## **THE WEAKNESS OF THE FLESH OVERCOME**

God chose a people, Israel, through whom He could work to bless the whole earth. Satan worked against those people.

*Now when the dragon [Satan] saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.*

Revelation 12:13

History records that after Israel produced the male child, her situation progressively worsened. If it were possible for Satan to succeed in his repeated attempts to destroy the entire Israeli race, much of God's Word could never be fulfilled, making it void. Satan could then accuse God of being incapable of keeping His Word. For this reason, God has directly intervened every time Satan has attempted to destroy the Jewish race.

Satan hindered God's initial plans in the Garden of Eden. When God brought forth the Law to counter this spiritual setback, Satan began work to make the Law ineffective. The Law was perfect. But because of the weakness of human flesh, Satan was again able to upset God's plan. When God sent Jesus to completely remedy the situation (as prophesied in Genesis 3:15), Satan was incapable of hindering God's plan because he could not overcome Jesus. Paul wrote:

*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*

*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.*

Romans 8:2-3

To overcome Satan, Jesus came in the weakness of the flesh. By exercising God-given strength over weaknesses, He defeated Satan on every count. As long as we recognize Jesus as the Source of our strength, we, His followers, can overcome. Remember Paul's words, "*For when I am weak, then I am strong*" (II Cor. 12:10).

We have no excuse for allowing Satan to take advantage of us through the weakness of the flesh. Hold fast to the biblical truth that Jesus has already overcome all areas of weakness and provided for us the spiritual ability to be strong. Because He has defeated Satan, we have defeated Satan. This is an exciting discovery! Through Christ we are more than conquerors. Greater is Jesus who is in us, than Satan who is in the world (Rom. 8:37; I John 4:4).

## **SATAN ALWAYS FAILS**

The first five verses of Revelation 12 cover the time from the birth of Christ into the last half of the Tribulation. In verse 6 we read John's prophecy concerning the remnant of Israel, picked up again in verse 14:

*Then the woman [Israel] fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*

*But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.*

Revelation 12:6, 14

The eagle could easily be identified as the United States, Israel's present

sponsor. The only “*great eagle*” nation, the United States, is capable of quickly airlifting Israelis to a hiding place. *The exact location of the wilderness and origin of the eagle’s wings is another of the unknowns of Revelation.*

From verses 6 and 14, we know that the length of “*a time and times and half a time*” equals 1,260 days (forty-two months or 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years). During the last half of the Tribulation, the woman, the remnant of Israel (which had not accepted Christ as the Messiah by mid-Tribulation), will be given a special place of hiding (on the earth) from the Antichrist (the serpent) for the preservation of the Jewish race.

When Satan cannot find the remnant of Israelis, his plans are again fouled. He was unable to destroy the Great Multitude and the 144,000 Jewish evangelists. The 144,000 had divine immunization; both groups were caught up to heaven. Every time Satan put his vehicle in motion, God interfered and stopped him.

Some people have taught that after Jesus appears and catches up the Church, God turns earth and its population over to Satan. Satan then comes forth with the Antichrist, the mark of the Beast, and false religion to subdue the whole world. The Tribulation is indeed a difficult period. However, Satan has never won a round and will not begin by winning any during the Tribulation. His plans and those of his agent, the Antichrist, continually fail.

Because his program does not work, the Antichrist becomes the most frustrated human on earth.

*So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.*

Revelation 12:15

From other uses of the word *flood* in the Scriptures, we know that the “*flood*” of verse 15 is not of water, but of words coming from Satan through

the man he has chosen to be the Antichrist. The Antichrist, a tremendous orator (see Daniel 7:8, 11, 25), attempts to convince the people among whom the remnant has been hidden to destroy the Israelis. Here is what happens:

*But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.*

Revelation 12:16

Literally interpreted, this verse means that whatever the Antichrist does in his attempt to destroy the remnant of Israel is swallowed up by an act of nature, as were Korah and his company (Num. 16:29-35). Since the remnant is hidden until the indignation is past (Rev. 12:14), they cannot be pursued by armies. The earth swallowing up the flood means the Antichrist's words are rejected by the people among whom the remnant is hidden.

*And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Revelation 12:17

The description of the forces of the Antichrist waging war in an attempt to destroy the remnant of Israel places this event as occurring shortly after mid-Tribulation. The remnant has ***“the testimony of Jesus Christ,”*** indicating they have accepted Jesus as their Messiah. We know that they, as members of the elect,<sup>2</sup> survive this attack. When Jesus returns, He calls all His elect to Himself from all over the earth and heaven.

*“Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of the earth to the farthest part of heaven.”*

Mark 13:26-27

With the reference to the remnant's salvation, an event which precedes Jesus' return, Revelation 12 has informed us of Israel's history from the birth of Christ through the Church Age and most of the Tribulation.

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<sup>1</sup>Because the 144,000 are sealed by having the Father's name written in their foreheads, they have divine immunization. (See Ezek. 9; Rev. 7, 14.)

<sup>2</sup>There are four elects: *Israel* (Isa. 45:4; 65:9; Luke 18:7), *the Church* (Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; Titus 1:1; I Pet. 1:2), *angels* (I Tim. 5:21), and *Jesus* (Isa. 42:1; I Pet. 2:6).

# – CHAPTER 13 – Revelation 13

## The Beast System

### *Informational*



Revelation 13 provides detailed insight into the meaning of the Beast with seven crowned heads and ten horns (the dragon introduced by Revelation 12:3). The Beast is a system created by Satan. With Satan as its direct source of power and basis for authority, it is like him.

#### THE SYSTEM

In the following vivid description of the Beast, John uses the name “blasphemy,” which further identifies this Beast with Satan:

*Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.*

Revelation 13:1

The Beast is the product of Satan’s work through people. The “sea” out of which it comes is not a body of water but masses of people – the sea of humanity. Just as God accomplishes His plan through human agents, Satan can only use the same vehicle.

The dragon of Revelation 12 has “seven crowned heads.” Each represents a kingdom or great empire. According to Revelation 13, the “ten horns” are also “crowned,” indicating that each exists as a nation ruled by a leader.

*Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.*

Revelation 13:2

The symbolism of the animals identifies this Beast with the prophecies of Daniel:

*Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.*

*"The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it.*

*"And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'*

*"After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.*

*"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.*

*"I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words."<sup>1</sup>*

Daniel was the only prophet who had all-inclusive insight into the “times of the Gentiles” as related to Israel’s captivity. The Gentile Age began with the captivity of Israel (721-608 b.c.) and will reach its conclusion with Israel’s restoration (1948 a.d. until the Millennium). From its beginning, the times of the Gentiles produce the great empires: Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman. Later in this study we will examine two empires which existed before these four.

Daniel interpreted a dream for King Nebuchadnezzar. (See Dan. 2.) In the dream was a great image with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly [“loins” KJV] and thighs of bronze [“brass” KJV], legs of iron, and feet and toes of iron and clay.

The “golden head” represented the *Babylonian Empire*; the “silver breast” represented the *Medo-Persian Empire*; the “brass loins and thighs” represented the empire of *Greece* under Alexander the Great; and the “legs, feet and toes of iron and clay” represented the great *Roman Empire*. The Roman Empire had two major divisions, symbolized by the legs and feet; and ten subdivisions, symbolized by the ten toes, which correspond to the ten horns.

The Beast with “seven crowned heads” and “ten crowned horns” symbolizes the same system as Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and Daniel’s vision (Dan. 2; 7.) Keep in mind that this entire satanic system of governments, commerce and religion is called “the Beast.”

## **THE SEAL LIFTED**

People in the past were unable to understand the prophetic Scriptures as clearly as we can today. The following verse gives us the reason:

*“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall*

*increase.”*

Daniel 12:4

A seal, placed on prophecies pertaining to the Gentile Age in relation to Israel's captivity and restoration, prevented those prophecies from coming to pass until the "*time of the end*" (when the Church Age ends so that the next age may begin).

According to the above verse we know that the "time of the end" has arrived when an explosion of knowledge and a great mobility of man occurs. These two outstanding things will primarily affect the believing Church company, the ones upon whom God is depending, but also describe the general conditions existing on earth during the time of the end.

Daniel 12 establishes clearly that, when the seal is lifted, the righteous begin a great quest for the knowledge of God, flowing with other believers to receive teaching.

The world has become much more mobile and knowledgeable since World War II. Undoubtedly, God has raised up the most outstanding teachers and ministers for this final generation of the Church Age. No longer limited to a specific location, believers can travel to hear these anointed men of God. This widespread traveling also serves to acquaint the believers with one another.

Since the world's knowledge is definitely increasing in this Space Age, a corresponding increase of knowledge on the spiritual level should also be evident among the saints. Increased knowledge of the Word will change some of our traditional teachings, bringing perfection. Because of the knowledge explosion and increased mobility since World War II, we can declare that the seal has been lifted. At that time, prophecy also began being fulfilled at a rapid pace. Especially the prophecies of Israel's restoration.

As long as the seal was intact, the Holy Spirit did not violate it in order to

reveal the prophetic Scriptures' full content prematurely. Now that the seal is gone and prophecy is being fulfilled, we have a distinct advantage over Bible scholars of the past. We need no longer speculate. Past inaccuracies of prophetic interpretation are exposed.

For years prophetic teachers, knowing little about the Beast System and its operation, taught only about the Antichrist. Since the Holy Spirit has opened the prophetic Scriptures to our understanding, we have discovered that the Beast is more than a man. The Beast refers to an entire system and two men.

## **THE BEAST'S FATAL WOUND**

*And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.*

Revelation 13:3

Some teachers declare that the man who heads the Beast System, the Antichrist, will be assassinated, then resurrected by the False Prophet to deceive the whole world. Such teaching is unsound and inharmonious with the entire biblical story. It would be impossible for the False Prophet to resurrect the Antichrist because only God the Holy Ghost has resurrection power, and would not resurrect this ungodly man.

One of the Beast's heads is wounded unto death. Each "head" represents a kingdom. Because the seal of Daniel 12 has been lifted, we know from studying the biblical and historical records that the Beast's fatal wound is the destruction of one of the great empires, the Roman Empire.

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, a stone destroys the great image. The "stone" represents the first coming of Jesus. The Church Age begins, wounding the sixth head to death.

The fall of the Roman Empire causes the demise of the entire system,

which will indeed be resurrected by Satan, amazing all the world.

Preceding his statement concerning the wounded head, John is still supplying information about the total system he calls “the Beast.” The man who eventually heads the system is also called a beast. Remember to differentiate between the two. It is the **system** and **not the man** who is mortally wounded.

So far, we have examined only the Beast System and not the man who heads it. With verse 5 John begins referring to the man who will have authority and head the vast system.

## THE ANTICHRIST

*So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”*

*And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.*

Revelation 13:4-5

The Beast System will be given a voice which speaks “*great things and blasphemies.*” He will be “*given authority to continue for forty-two months.*” As is generally known, the man who will become the Antichrist does not take this image upon himself until the last half of the Tribulation. During the first half he attempts to pass himself off as a man of peace, worthy of world leadership.

He will be an outstanding leader of the European states, a diplomat of the first order. We know this because Daniel 9:26 tells us that “*the people of the prince who is to come [the Antichrist] shall destroy the city [Jerusalem] and sanctuary [the Temple].*” This occurred between 68-70 a.d. when the Roman empire, which dominated the European- Mediterranean area, put down a

Jewish rebellion. In the process they destroyed the city of Jerusalem, including the temple, slaughtering all the men, and taking the women and children captive to be slaves throughout the world. Thus began the Jewish Diaspora. This event also fulfilled the prophecies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke (see Matt. 23:29-36; 24:12; Luke 21:20-24.)

Using his ability to combine the governments, commerce, military and religion of the European Union, he affects the resurrection of the Beast System. He is so successful in establishing his system that the nations with which he is associated make him their head. We have seen that at mid-Tribulation he begins his attempt to conquer the world. Breaking his agreement with Israel, he begins pursuing the office of world president or dictator. However, Jesus is the only man who will ever succeed in ruling this world.

*Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.*

Revelation 13:6

The Antichrist blasphemes the many people who have escaped him and his system, but to no avail. They are in heaven!

*It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.*

Revelation 13:7

Since the Church company is already before the throne of God as this scene takes place, the “*saints*” referred to in the above verse are not the believers of the Church Age. Neither are they the saints of the first half of the Tribulation, the converts of the 144,000 born-again Jewish evangelists. As we shall see in our study of chapter 14, God will be bringing even more people into His kingdom during the second half of the Tribulation using the ministry

of angels.

Verse 7 states that the Antichrist was given power “*over every tribe, tongue, and nation.*” But verses 2 and 4 reveal that it is Satan who gives him that authority.<sup>2</sup> Remember, Satan’s power and authority do not begin to compare with God’s. In fact, he has none! (Matt. 28:18). He is only capable of deception and lies, and can do nothing without a human through whom to work. If the Antichrist’s assignment were from God, he would succeed. However, since it is from Satan, he fails despite the tremendous vehicles with which he has to work. Satan has used numerous other men through the centuries in his attempt to crush God’s people and gain control over the world, and ALL have failed.

The Antichrist receives this satanic authority at mid- Tribulation (Rev. 13:5), when he breaks his seven-year agreement with Israel, and attempts to make war with her people (Dan. 9:27). At that moment, God raptures the converts of the 144,000 (Rev. 7:9-17), and hides the remnant of not yet born-again Jews (Rev. 12:13-17), along with the 144,000 themselves. After ministering to the remnant and leading them all to salvation (Rev. 12:17), the 144,000 are also raptured (Rev. 14:1-5). This leaves only the converts of the angelic ministry (Rev. 14:6-7) and the converts of the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:3) on the earth to face the wrath of the Antichrist, whose area of influence and control is limited to the European-Mediterranean region.

The statements in verse 7 are much less awesome when tied to the information in verse 2.<sup>3</sup> The idea of the Antichrist and his system having absolute authority is properly diminished to fit the rest of the story.

*All who dwell on the earth will worship him [the Antichrist], whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

Revelation 13:8

One’s name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life by accepting Him as

their Savior and Lord.

*If anyone has an ear, let him hear. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*

Revelation 13:9-10

Please do not take the phrase, “*all who dwell on the earth,*” as literal and all-inclusive. Doing so would include the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, the remnant of Israel, the Arabs who resist the Antichrist (Isa. 19; Zech. 14) and many Gentiles (Zech. 8:23) as worshiping the Antichrist.

The statement, “*If anyone has an ear, let him hear,*” clearly reveals that God is attempting to gain the attention of all people during this time. God is saying, “If you listen to Me and obey Me, you will not be caught in this satanic system.”

He further emphasizes that destruction awaits those people who foolishly become part of the Antichrist system. Therefore, He calls on the saints, or saved ones, of that period to remain patient and continue in the faith.

## **THE FALSE PROPHET**

John finds the descriptive word “*beast*” useful in referring to the entire system and the two men who lead it.

Verse 11 discloses the third character John identifies as a beast, known as the False Prophet:

*Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.*

Deceptively, the False Prophet has a religious identity: he looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon.

*And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.*

*He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.*

*And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by a sword and lived.*

*He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.*

Revelation 13:12-15

The False Prophet immediately brings great deception, causing many people on the earth to worship the Beast System. He has cunning occult powers. Of the Antichrist's operation, Paul says there will be "*lying wonders*" (II Thess. 2:9). These are clever maneuvers designed to appear as genuine miracles in an attempt to deceive all mankind. None of the acts of either the Antichrist or the False Prophet are true miracles.

The False Prophet has an image created of the Beast and threatens death to all who do not worship it. Keep in mind that the Beast System is not worldwide, but operating from its European base. Worship of the image introduces idolatry, which God has always rejected (Lev. 26:1).

## **THE MARK OF THE BEAST**

*He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of*

*the beast, or the number of his name.*

*Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.*

Revelation 13:16-18

According to biblical numerology, a man's number is "six." The number six indicates "incompleteness." The number of the Beast System is three sixes. Therefore, this system is an incomplete operation which will fail. Since the entire structure has been designed by the dragon (Satan), it is very destructive, but imperfect. Again, we visualize the evil trinity: Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet.

As the Tribulation progresses, the situation on earth becomes increasingly more critical, especially during the last half. Particularly in the geographical areas held by the Beast System, there will be less commercial operation because there will be very little left to buy or sell due to famine and wars. However, through the mark of the Beast, the Antichrist attempts to take over as much of the world's remaining commercial operation as possible.

To continue buying and selling, one must take the mark of the system's identification on either the right hand or the forehead. The system uses the mark and the threat of death to coerce people into surrender. Of course, they that take the mark or worship the Beast's image seal their doom. There is no possibility of salvation for them (Rev. 14:9-11).

There has been great controversy and speculation over the exact design of the mark. Its most outstanding characteristic will be its association with the number 666. We should not speculate about its design beyond this because the Scripture is not specific.

Some people become upset when a phone number, street address, or license plate contains the number 666. Someone has pointed out that the license number on many of the commercial vehicles in Israel begin with an

ominous 666.<sup>4</sup> This is superstition! The number 666 itself is not significant. However, when it identifies all those people who become part of the Beast System, it will become significant.

Today we live in a time of forerunners. For the sake of speed and efficiency, every major concern identifies its customers by an account number. Our accounting system is not satanic; our use of credit cards and Social Security is not of the Antichrist. These systems are only forerunners of the Antichrist's attempts to take over world commerce.

The Antichrist and the False Prophet have a period of exactly seven years to attempt to carry out their plan for world conquest. At mid-Tribulation, they take over a number of governments. They attempt to take over (1) religion by calling for worship of the Beast, which is idolatry, and (2) commerce, by the issuance of the identification mark. The Antichrist is ready to promote himself. He moves into the Jerusalem temple and exalts himself above all that is called God.

*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

## II Thessalonians 2:3-4

The Antichrist promotes himself at the expense of his own system and anyone in his way. He has one major problem: God continually gets in his way!

The Beast System is most successful in the European- Mediterranean area. Since the Arabs reject the system and survive, I am convinced many other nations also survive the Tribulation. (See Isa. 19:23-25; Ezek. 38:13; Zech 14:16-19.)

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<sup>1</sup>The little horn of verse 8 refers to the Antichrist. The description of the man who will become the Antichrist correlates perfectly with John's description.

<sup>2</sup>Daniel 8:24 confirms Revelation 13:2.

<sup>3</sup>Also when compared to Matthew 28:18, Revelation 6:8, and especially Daniel 11:24, 30, 32, 40-41, 44.

<sup>4</sup>Many commercial vehicles owned by Arabs in Israel have license plate numbers beginning with 666. Through this method, the Israelis can quickly identify the Arabs in case of emergency.

– CHAPTER 14 –

# Revelation 17

## The Harlot

### *Informational*



Revelation 17 offers an excellent explanation of what Revelation 13 sets forth. Because these two chapters connect so perfectly, we are examining them consecutively for more fruitful understanding.

### HER IDENTITY

The harlot is the personification of false religion. She is the amalgamation of all man's religions into one organization.

*Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."*

*So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

Revelation 17:1-3

The "waters" of verse 1 are peoples, nations, races and languages. This "great harlot" ["whore" KJV] has had such vast influence over masses of people that she has been able to control entire nations. The kings of the earth

have committed fornication with her, and the inhabitants of the earth are drunk with the wine of her fornication. What a horrible scene! Religion in any form is spiritual infidelity.

“*Fornication*” refers to false religion, which has a form of godliness but denies the power thereof (II Tim. 3:5, KJV). It substitutes religious rights and membership for true repentance and salvation. God considers all people who worship anyone or anything besides Himself participants in spiritual fornication and adultery. He includes even those who are sincere in their involvement. The “*woman*” identified as the “*harlot*” is carrying on an affair with the Beast.

Revelation 17 reveals additional information about the Beast System. The “*seven heads*” are great kingdoms; the “*ten horns*” are lesser kingdoms. The “*harlot*” of Revelation has been supported by the Beast System since its beginning.

*The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

Revelation 17:4-5

In this description and list of names, “*MYSTERY*” is the first name that identifies the harlot. She is of a religious nature – mystical, spiritualistic. Close historical examination reveals that she dominated the seven great empires supporting her. It is not surprising to note that spiritualist mediums or people who practiced witchcraft controlled the leaders of the great empires from the time of Egypt until the fall of the Roman Empire.

The harlot’s second title is “*BABYLON THE GREAT,*” identifying the harlot religious system with Babylon and every successive Gentile empire.

This clearly shows that the harlot began to exert her influence within the Gentile empires.

The harlot's third title, "*THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS*," indicates that every evil and destructive thing on earth results from the operation of Satan through her.

Her fourth title, "*THE MOTHER OF ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH*," reveals her total rejection by God.

## **HER LENGTH OF OPERATION**

*I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.*

Revelation 17:6

The harlot has operated over a vast period of time. The Gentile empires resulted from Israel's collapse and captivity.

History records that with the Egyptian Empire, the system was ushered in. The Egyptian Empire, the first head of the Beast System, enslaved the family of Israel. When God delivered them, they established the great nation of Israel. Then came their rebellion and captivity. Assyria was the Gentile empire which initiated Israel's captivity by taking the ten northern tribes. The southern tribes of Judah were taken into Babylonian captivity about 107 years later. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2) begins with the Babylonian Empire after Israel's total captivity.

With the fall of the Roman Empire, the entire system crumbled. The harlot, which had a controlling influence on Gentile empires, was responsible for the death of many of God's saints, including those of the Early Church. In Revelation 17, as in chapter 12, John is tying historical records to future events.

*But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition.”*

Revelation 17:7-8

Again, John refers to the entire satanic system. As history records the empires, the Bible confirms the system’s existence. Both the biblical and historical records depict the collapse of the Gentile empire system – the defeat of a satanic attempt at world control. Its demise directly resulted from the first coming of Jesus and the establishing of the true Church. Daniel chapter 2 spells this out clearly (see Dan. 2:34-35, 44).

The stone of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is a type of Christ. During the Roman Empire, the Father sent Jesus Who struck a death blow to Satan’s system and established His kingdom, *the Church*, upon the earth.

John states that the satanic system will be restored briefly, then totally destroyed.

*“And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

*“Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.”*

Revelation 17:8-10

This statement, *“The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits”* (verse 9) is easily explained. We know that each of the seven crowned heads represents a great kingdom, confirmed by verse 9.

In examining the word “*mountain*,” we use a law of interpretation established by God’s Word. When *mountain* is used in a passage which does not specifically name an existing range of mountains for a geographical location, it represents a kingdom. By reading the verses above and below the one in which *mountain* is used, you discover that it refers to a kingdom, not to a huge pile of rocks. The seven heads of verse 9 are seven great kingdoms. Verse 10 further confirms this: “*There are also seven kings.*” A king, a national leader, is over each of the seven kingdoms.

When John states “*five have fallen*,” he refers to the past. History records that at the time John received this prophecy, five great Gentile empires had come and gone. He also said, “*one is [the sixth], and the other [the seventh one] has not yet come.*”

“*On which the woman sits*” indicates that the woman has tremendously influenced each of the kingdoms over a vast period of time.

## THE SEVEN KINGDOMS

History names the great kingdoms or Gentile empires that the heads of the Beast System represent. The first is the *Egyptian Empire*; the second, the *Assyrian*; the third, the great *Babylonian Empire* under Nebuchadnezzar and his grandson, Belshazzar.

When Israel began to fall away from God, the first great Gentile empire to form was the Assyrian. The Babylonians then overthrew the Assyrian Empire by dissolving it into their own. At the time of the Babylonian Empire, Daniel began his prophecies concerning the development of the Gentile empires. Also, Judah and Benjamin, the last two tribes of Israel, were taken captive.

The fourth head was the *Medo-Persian Empire*. Daniel 5:5-31 records the account of the handwriting that appeared on the wall. It told of the Babylonian Empire’s destruction and the rise of the Medes and the Persians. This fourth empire gave way to the fifth, the *Greek Empire* under Alexander the Great. When it collapsed, the sixth, the *Roman Empire*, swallowed it up.

The Roman Empire existed when John received the prophecy. During this time Jesus came to earth, laid the foundation for His Church and became its Chief Cornerstone. The apostles began building on that foundation. The Church would accomplish an extremely productive work during its approximately 2,000 years on earth between the sixth and seventh heads of the system. The coming of Jesus Christ struck Satan a tremendous mortal blow. The Beast System collapsed with the fall of the Roman Empire.

Examining these biblical and historical truths gives us good understanding of what God is doing. As long as the Church is on the earth carrying out Jesus' ministry, the system cannot return to full operation. We are presently watching the system being prefabricated. After the Church is caught up, the Antichrist will fit the pieces together. This will be the resurrection of the system which produced the sixth head that was wounded unto death, the Roman Empire.

The vast Satan-motivated Gentile system had three major divisions: (1) government, (2) commerce, and (3) religion. When one empire succeeded another, the head of government changed, but the commercial and religious systems remained the same. Religions were always controlled by witchcraft in its most cunning and subtle form, commanding control of the people. As a sum total of the previous five heads, the Roman Empire was very wicked, immoral and pagan.

The Church is a godly vehicle; the empire system is satanic. Because the Church has the greater power and authority, the satanic system cannot operate as long as the Church is on earth.

## **THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH HEADS**

Numerous attempts have been made to restore the system. Napoleon, Hitler and Mussolini were only three of many who tried, though unsuccessfully. For the first time since the fall of the Roman Empire, today's events clearly expose initial groundwork being laid for the restoration of the system. We identify the *European Union* as an amalgamation of the

European nations that comprise the seventh head of the seven-headed Beast. Daniel chapters 7 and 8 provide additional identity. Actually, we are observing a restoration of only the western division of the Roman Empire. Watch this system closely.

The resurrected system – the seventh head – will not be a restoration of the Roman Empire, but of the system that produced the Roman Empire. It will be comprised of a *minimum* of ten nations and will not necessarily be contained in the exact same geographical area as the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup>

In January of 1973, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark signed documents to join the European Union (formerly the Common Market of Europe), suddenly bringing its membership to ten nations. When God put it in the hearts of the Norwegians to reject membership, they failed to ratify their treaty. The European Union dropped from ten nations to nine. This action delayed the formation of the seventh head until Greece became the tenth member on January 1, 1981. Presently there are twenty- seven members of the European Union. The nations of the European Union will bring forth the Antichrist once the Church is caught away.

Of verse 9 we can only conclude that “*seven mountains*” refer to the seven great kingdoms, each ruled by a king. Today, six of them have fallen. The seventh head, now in its infancy, will produce the eighth head, *the Antichrist*. Remember that the “little horn” of Daniel chapters 7 and 8 is the same as the “eighth head” of Revelation 17:11. Both symbols identify the Antichrist.

According to John, once the seventh head becomes operational under the Antichrist, it lasts only a short time (the first  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years of the Tribulation). During this time, the Antichrist brings together the governments, armies, commerce and religions of the European Union. He uses the harlot system to advance himself to the center of world religion.

At mid-Tribulation the Antichrist, produced by the seventh head, assumes the identity of the eighth head. “*The beast that was, and is not, is himself also*

*the eighth, and is of the seven” (Rev. 17:11). He attempts to force himself on the world as a self-appointed “god,” existing for only 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years before being cast alive into the lake of fire when Christ returns.*

*“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These [the ten kings] will make war with the Lamb [Jesus] . . .”*

#### Revelation 17:12-14

The kings of the ten most promising nations enter into a strong agreement with the Antichrist, pledging him their armies and their influence. Upon the anticipated success of the Antichrist’s campaign, the kings will receive great kingdoms.

This is the alliance of rulers and armies which the Antichrist leads on the final day of the Tribulation. The combined armies of the kings are destroyed in the Battle of Armageddon fought against the returning Christ.

In the scene of verse 14 – Christ’s return to the earth – we are given further proof that the Church is caught up before the Tribulation’s final day:

*“ . . . and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”*

Throughout the New Testament the terms *called, chosen* and *faithful* identify members of the true Church – the Body of Christ. The “*called, chosen, and faithful*” – the Church company – is returning with Jesus. (Zechariah 14:5 also confirms this truth.) The members of the Church, along with all others who take part in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:6), will administer Jesus’ kingdom on earth.

## THE DESTRUCTION OF THE HARLOT

When the Antichrist is ready to pursue his ambition to become God, he must destroy the religious system in order to rule unopposed as the spiritual leader. The following passage describes the destruction of the harlot religious system:

*Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.”*

Revelation 17:15-16

Hating the influence of the harlot upon their people, the Antichrist and the False Prophet use the military power of the ten nations to quickly destroy her. The national leaders happily accommodate because the harlot has been a great irritation to them.

Notice that God put it in the hearts of the ten kings to destroy the harlot. This action gives us insight into God’s sovereignty. We see another example of God’s use of the Egyptian pharaoh described in the following passage:

*“And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.”*

Exodus 7:3-4

*Sovereign* means “above all others; chief . . . supreme in power . . . ruler . . . independent of all others.”<sup>2</sup> The pharaoh was already against Israel. God simply strengthened or hardened his attitude all the more. The same was true of the ten kings. God put within them (or gave them over to) their desires.

Both the pharaoh and the kings had a choice. Since they decided to pursue evil, God allowed them to become totally driven by those desires. God's sovereignty extends even to withholding His restraint. He allows those who have evil intentions to carry them out. In one case, God used His sovereignty directly for the good of Israel; in the other, He used it to destroy part of Satan's operation. Again, the outcome was for the ultimate good of the people.

At the Antichrist's right hand is the False Prophet who, of course, gives his approval for the harlot's destruction. The followers of the Beast System accept their leaders' decision. The harlot's destruction clears the way for the False Prophet to announce the implementation of the mark of the Beast and worship of his image.

From the temple in Jerusalem, the Antichrist starts exerting his influence. These mid-Tribulation events prepare the way of the Antichrist for the next 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years.

## **THE DESTROYED CITY**

*“For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.*

*“And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”*

Revelation 17:17-18

There have been several theories as to the identity of the city which is destroyed. All of them are pure speculation. Some people reason that the city of Babylon will be rebuilt and repopulated. Others suggest Rome, Italy.

Many years ago some theologians taught that the “*seven mountains on which the woman sits*” are the seven hills of Rome. They concluded that the

Roman Catholic Church is the harlot. This is not so!

The harlot is not any single denominational structure. She is an amalgamation of *all* the world's ecclesiastical, man-made religions, including the present-day denominations choosing to have only a form of godliness.

Today the ancient harlot is about to receive a new vehicle through which she can function. Quite possibly, it is the World Council of Churches that works for unity of all religions. While man-made religions are working to bring all Christians under their control, the Holy Spirit is working to bring them together as the glorious Church!

We know the city destroyed at mid-Tribulation will be the headquarters of the harlot religious system or, as some have identified it, the world church. But its exact identity is unknown. Presently it is Geneva, Switzerland, headquarters of the World Council of Churches, the World Bank, and is the city of treaties between nations.

Instead of being sidetracked with the Beast's different facets, we need to view the system as a whole. Just remember: its major parts are presently being prefabricated and it will be an amazing man who brings together into one operation these pieces of governments, commerce, armies, and the harlot religious system.

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel 7:8 shows the Antichrist uproots three of the original nations. This indicates that the European Union will be comprised of more than ten nations in order to maintain a membership of ten after a loss of three.

<sup>2</sup>Webster's New World College Dictionary, 3d ed., s.v. "sovereign".

– CHAPTER 15 –

# Revelation 14 and 15

## *Informational*



The first five verses of Revelation 14 continue the description of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists begun in Revelation 7. Since we have already examined this information, we will begin our study with verse 6.

### THE ANGELS' MINISTRY

Angels minister to all nations during the last half of the Tribulation.

*Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people – saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”*

Revelation 14:6-7

We learned from Revelation 5 that all the angels (approximately 100 billion) appear in heaven around God’s throne at the sounding of His trumpet. At this time the Church company has been received from earth to heaven. Since the Scriptures give us insight into the assignment and ministry of angels, we know they will assist the 144,000 plus take up assignments in behalf of their converts.

At mid-Tribulation, when the converts of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists are caught up, angels will again take up and carry out their earthly

assignments. Their ministry runs concurrently with that of the Two Witnesses in Jerusalem and the Jewish evangelists to the remnant of Israel.

The Church is the present-day vehicle for preaching the Gospel. Once it finishes its assignment and is caught up, God selects the 144,000 Jewish evangelists to preach the Gospel. As the 144,000 are about to depart for heaven after finishing their assignment, ministering angels begin preaching the Gospel.

God's mercy endures forever. Through His divine order, He keeps the Gospel steadily flowing to all the earth. Salvation is still available through believing the Gospel, "*the power of God to salvation*" (Rom. 1:16).

### **“WORSHIP GOD”**

Proclaiming that the hour of God's judgment has come, angels call on people to fear and worship God, the glorious Creator of all.

As we have seen, this action creates an enormous problem for the Antichrist. It is obvious to the people he is attempting to influence that he cannot control the preaching angels (nor the Two Witnesses, nor the plagues). This is only the beginning of his troubles.

### **“BABYLON IS FALLEN”**

The angelic ministry is extremely diverse. While some angels are preaching the everlasting Gospel to all nations, others are announcing the destruction of the Babylonian harlot religious system.

*“And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”*

Revelation 14:8

These angels announce to the world that the Antichrist led his armies in

the harlot's destruction to make way for the fulfillment of his own evil ambition to become God.

## **“DO NOT TAKE THE MARK OR WORSHIP THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST”**

*Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation.*

*“He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”*

*Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

Revelation 14:9-12

Another angel warns against becoming involved with the Antichrist's new religion. The angels are actually saying, “With the destruction of the religious harlot, you are free from the bondage which controlled you through false religion!” (We learned of the harlot's widespread control in Revelation 17.)

As the angels inform the people of the harlot's destruction, they also strongly warn against taking the mark of the Beast and worshiping his image. Through the angels, God further demonstrates His love by forewarning the people of the consequences: separation from God and eternal punishment in the lake of fire.

## **LITERAL HELL**

Some people question the existence of a literal hell. They wonder whether there will be eternal punishment in an actual lake of fire. The infallible Scriptures teach that hell exists. The Bible is the only book which is absolutely accurate. God's Word is settled in heaven and He changes not (Ps. 119:89; Mal. 3:6).

Some scholars point out that no Greek word exists for the English word *everlasting*. The Greek word used, *aion*, means "age." An age has a beginning and an ending. Additionally, the Scripture uses "age upon age." In the original translations, one finds the use of *aion* upon *aion*, which simply means "ages unending."

In studying the whole biblical account, we discover that the same Greek word implying "everlasting punishment and torment" is used to indicate both the everlasting life of one who has accepted Jesus as Savior and the everlasting existence of God. If the Greek word *aion* does not imply everlasting punishment, it must not imply that God's existence is everlasting, an obviously invalid conclusion. Allow Scripture to interpret and support other Scripture.

## **"CHURCH, BE PATIENT"**

A strong admonition emerges from verse 12. By the Holy Spirit, John calls on the Church – of his day and ours – to be patient, to keep God's Word and their faith in Jesus. Refuse to be sidetracked and carried off by any wind of doctrine.

## **A PREVIEW OF THE THIRD GREAT SOUL HARVEST**

*Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."*

*Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One*

*like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.*

*And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”*

*So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

Revelation 14:13-16

These verses reveal another major harvest of souls; the results of the anointed ministry of the angels.

## **A PREVIEW OF THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON**

The remainder of Revelation 14 previews the forthcoming Battle of Armageddon. Christ is pictured preparing to harvest the whole earth. This event involves His return when He takes over all governments.

*Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.*

*And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.”*

*So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and the blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.<sup>1</sup>*

Revelation 14:17-20

The clusters of the vine of the earth are the earth's people. The winepress of this verse is the same as the one of God in Revelation 19:15. Jesus' action of treading the winepress symbolizes His destroying the Antichrist's evil forces and the 200 million-man Oriental army at Armageddon.

The preview of the final battle continues. Armies from many areas of the world – particularly Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Orient – converge at the battle site. Jesus returns to earth. At that moment, Jesus speaks the Word while standing on the Mount of Olives. This releases the plague vividly described in Zechariah 14:12. In one hour, the vast armada of hundreds of millions is reduced to a pool of blood filling an area of approximately 200 square miles. Revelation 19 describes the Battle of Armageddon in greater detail.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE TRIBULATION'S FINAL MONTH**

Revelation 15 serves as an introduction to Revelation 16, an especially important chapter which brings the intense story into its final month. The following passage describes the severity of the last seven plagues released during this month, which continue to the Battle of Armageddon, and the magnitude of the events about to occur:

*Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.*

Revelation 15:1-2

Verse 2 contains the second reference to the “crystal sea” John sees before the great throne of God. Throughout the Scriptures, *fire* is a type of symbolism of the Holy Spirit at work. The crystal sea (the Church company)

“mingled with fire” is the product of the Holy Spirit’s activities. Many other people are supported by the Church, indicating the tremendous importance of the Church’s position, especially the relationship between the Church and the natural seed of Israel as set forth by Paul in Romans 11.

John also describes those people, victorious over the Antichrist and his system, (including the Jewish evangelists and their converts) caught up during the Tribulation.

*They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!”*

Revelation 15:3

The “King of the saints” is Jesus. We saw that according to Zechariah 8:23 many Gentiles are saved during the Tribulation.<sup>2</sup> However, the Great Multitude is an Israeli company, along with the great masses of people representing every other nation, tribe and tongue. The first group taken up to heaven, the Church, is basically Gentile.

*“Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.”*

Revelation 15:4

Continuing its worship in song before the throne, this group gives an accurate account of the scenes of worship which will occur during Jesus’ 1,000-year reign on earth. All nations, righteous or not, will come and worship before the Lamb. (See Zech. 14:16.)

*After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.*

*Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.*

*The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.*

Revelation 15:5-8

The way for the last plagues is now prepared!

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<sup>1</sup>A furlong is 1/8 of a mile or 220 yard. "Sixteen hundred furlongs" equals 352,000 yards; 1,760 yards equals one mile; thus 1,600 furlongs equals 200 miles.

<sup>2</sup>Zechariah 8:23 correlates with Revelation 7:9-17, the description of the Great Multitude's catching up at mid-Tribulation.

# Part V



# **The Prophecy**

## **Revelation 16, 18-20**

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– CHAPTER 16 –

# Revelation 16

## The Seven Last Plagues

### *Earth*



Many years ago when I first began teaching Revelation 16, I saw no time frame associated with the plagues it describes. I went to prayer. “Father, someone is eventually going to ask me how long these plagues last, and I will have to say, ‘I do not know.’ If there is anything in Your Word that will help me understand how long they last, please call it to my attention.”

Our Heavenly Father answered by asking, “Is this the first time I have used plagues to deliver the children of Israel?”

“No,” I replied. “You used plagues once before when the Israelis were in Egyptian bondage.”

When He urged me to read the Exodus account, I knew I was on the right track. Immediately, I read Exodus chapters 7 through 12, the story of the ten plagues under Moses’ direction, which God used to deliver Israel out of bondage. The plagues began and ended in the course of one month. This suggests that the plagues of Revelation occur during the Tribulation’s final month. Because of the devastating nature of these plagues, they begin to be poured out following the death of the Two Witnesses, and will continue to the time of Christ’s return and the Battle of Armageddon.

In the Exodus account, there are ten plagues, beginning and ending in a single month; in Revelation there are only seven. However, with the exception of the passing over of the death angel, the nature of the Revelation

plagues is far more hideous than the Exodus plagues. Were these plagues to last over more than a few days, no one on whom they were poured could survive. God does not bring this sinful generation to such an end. These last seven plagues are designed to aid in the destruction of the Beast System, the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Due to the horrible nature of these plagues, they begin only four days before the final day of the Tribulation.

## **A GRIEVOUS SORE**

*Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.*

Revelation 16:1-2

The first plague is a noisome and grievous sore, like a painful boil, which brings severe suffering from infection and fever. The final plagues, released as direct wrath from God, fall on the wicked. Notice that the first plague affects only those people who have taken the mark of the Beast and worshiped his image! This indicates that people who have refused to worship the Beast or take his mark are unaffected by these plagues.<sup>1</sup>

## **THE WATERS BECOME BLOOD**

*Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.*

Revelation 16:3

The plague released by the second trumpet of Revelation 8, causes one-third of the seas to become blood.<sup>2</sup> With the plague released by the second vial of Revelation 16, the remaining two-thirds of the seas become as blood.

This blood is like the thick, coagulated blood of a dead man which gives off a great stench! Immediately, all ships afloat sink and all aboard drown in this blood. How horrible!

*Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.*

Revelation 16:4

The blood of the third plague is the type that flows when one is cut severely.

*And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due."*

Revelation 16:5-6

Giving the wicked blood to drink is a just punishment. Many of them have shed the blood of the apostles and saints.

*And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."*

Revelation 16:7

The people under the altar are the martyred saints of the Tribulation (Rev. 6:9-11). Apparently aware of what is happening, they proclaim, "You are perfectly just in dealing this way with the rebellious people."

As the third trumpet sounds, one-third of the sources of domestic water becomes poisoned. The seas and sources of domestic waters are partially affected by the second and third plagues of Revelation 8. The pouring of the second and third bowls of Revelation 16 completes the plagues of Revelation

8, affecting one-fourth of the waters of the earth. In the remainder of the Tribulation's last month, followers of the Antichrist have no source of water. They can only quench their thirst with blood.<sup>3</sup>

## UNREPENTANT HEARTS

*Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.*

Revelation 16:8-9

As the fourth trumpet sounds, the sun, moon and stars are darkened, giving no natural light for an eight-hour period of each day. The plague released by the pouring of the fourth vial affects the sun, causing it to give forth extremely hot rays. Men suffer heat prostration, severe sunburn and dehydration.

*Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.*

Revelation 16:10

The seat of the Beast is in the geographical area that comes under the Antichrist's authority. Prophetic Scriptures reveal this to be basically the European-Mediterranean and Middle Eastern areas. The pouring of the fifth vial brings darkness upon the Antichrist's entire kingdom. This completes the plague begun by the sounding of the fourth trumpet. There is no natural light over the nations under the Antichrist at the end of the Tribulation.

With the immense suffering occurring, one would think that repentance would be universal. The reverse is true – people blaspheme God all the more because of their suffering.

*They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.*

Revelation 16:11

## **THE ARMIES GATHER**

The pouring of the sixth vial directly relates to the sounding of the sixth trumpet of Revelation 9.

*Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.*

Revelation 16:12

The sixth trumpet releases the vast demon-driven Oriental army. To reach its destination, the battle sight of Armageddon, it marches through the Asian areas, destroying everything in its path.

*And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*

Revelation 16:13-14

The “*battle of that great day of God Almighty*” is the Battle of Armageddon. Satan is the dragon gathering as many armies as possible. He must use man in his last futile effort to defeat the Lord Jesus.

The following statement refers to Jesus’ appearing to receive the Church. This places the Church company on the winning side at Armageddon. Carefully read this admonition from Jesus:

*“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”*

*And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.*

Revelation 16:15-16

Many major battles have been fought in the Valley of Megiddo that stretches into the great plains of the Valley of Jezreel. This site is used again for the Battle of Armageddon.

### **NATURE'S FINAL UPHEAVAL**

*Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!”*

Revelation 16:17

As the Tribulation comes to an end, the seventh angel pours his vial into the air as the pronouncement comes from heaven, *“It is done!”* This signals the sounding of the seventh trumpet. This is the same event as the angel’s declaration in Revelation 10:7:

*But in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.*

Suddenly the most tremendous upheaval of nature occurs. This is the cataclysmic event which follows Jesus’ opening of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-17) and the sounding of the final trumpet (Rev. 11:15-19).

*And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on earth.*

*Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.*

*Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail from heaven fell upon men, every hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.*

Revelation 16:18-21

When the seventh and last angelic trumpet sounds, a series of events occur on the final day of the Tribulation, as recorded in Revelation 6:12-17; 11:15-19; and 16:17-21. On the final day of the Tribulation, chaotic, cataclysmic, devastating, awesome and supernatural events occur. A combination of the sixth seal, seventh trumpet, and seventh vial of God's wrath are enacted in a twenty-four-hour period. Allow me to categorize and list these events.

#### **1. UPHEAVAL OF NATURE.**

A. Great earthquake (Rev. 6:12; 11:19; 16:18).

B. Sun becomes black, moon as blood (Rev. 6:12; Joel 2:30-31; Matt. 24:29).

C. Stars fall, collide with earth (Rev. 6:13).

D. Sky recedes, rolls up (Rev. 6:14; 19:11).

E. Mountains moved (Rev. 6:14; 16:20).

F. Islands moved (Rev. 6:14; 16:20).

G. Thunderings and lightnings (Rev. 11:19; 16:18).

H. Hailstorm (Rev. 11:19; 16:21).

## 2. DESTRUCTION.

A. Earth struck severe blow by falling stars (Rev. 6:13); should fulfill Isaiah 13:13.

B. Jerusalem divided into three parts (Rev. 16:19).

C. Cities around the world destroyed (Rev. 16:19).

D. Godless Beast System used by the Antichrist destroyed (Rev. 16:19).

E. Armageddon (first and last statements of Rev. 11:18; also Rev. 19:11-21; Zech. 14).

## 3. SUPERNATURAL ACTION.

A. Kingdoms of world become kingdoms of our Lord (Isa. 9:6; Rev. 11:15, 17; 19:11-21).

B. Righteous dead – martyrs – are resurrected and judged. (This is a righteous judgment – a good one!) (Rev. 11:18.)

C. Rewarding of the prophets (Two Witnesses) and Tribulation saints (Rev. 11:18).

D. Men of all ranks attempt to hide from God (Rev. 6:15-16).

E. Jesus and His army of saints return to defeat Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet (Zech. 14; Rev. 6:17; 19:11-20).

God remembers *Babylon*, the total Babylonian Beast System used by the Antichrist, and pours out the fierceness of His wrath. The upheaval is so devastating that the entire surface of the earth changes. As the earthquake destroys the land, hail weighing a talent (approximately 90-105 pounds) falls from heaven. This upheaval brings about the fulfillment of Isaiah 13:13 which states, “*The earth will move out of her place.*” Such an event would

correct the earth's axis.

Imagine the terrible scene. The stench of the oceans' coagulated blood fills the atmosphere. The rays of the sun are hot, and no water is available to drink – only blood! The people who have taken the mark of the Beast and worshiped his image are troubled with boils and, of course, raging fever. On this final day of the Tribulation, people are suffering from the last plagues, the great earthquake and hailstones, the return of Christ to the earth and the monumental Battle of Armageddon.

This horrible scene results from the sin of rebellion against God. *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”* (Prov. 14:12). Rejection of Jesus Christ, combined with the stubbornness of following selfish desires, causes multitudes of people to be destroyed by the fruit of their devices. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6). Living through the horror of the Tribulation's final month can be avoided by accepting Jesus.

As you have examined all the events which are to occur on the last day of the Tribulation, I am sure you noticed that there is not even a hint of a great catching up among them. Only the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11:11-13 are taken up on that day. It is a day of returning to the earth for Jesus, the Church, the 144,000, and the mid-Tribulation company, who were also caught away from earth to heaven. The revealing of the plagues of God's wrath in chapters 8, 9 and 16 is an act of God's love for mankind. Consider this fact: these chapters have been a fixed part of God's Word for nearly 2,000 years. God loves mankind so much that He has forewarned them of what is to happen to those who consistently rebel against Him. God does not want anyone to be a recipient of His wrath, so He sends a powerful warning.

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<sup>1</sup>Many people survive the Tribulation. (See Isa. 19:23-25; Zech. 14:18-19; Rev. 12:14.) They will have refused to take the mark of the Beast or worship

his image, and will have lived through wars and plagues. This will not be easy, but man has a great asset: the determination to survive.

<sup>2</sup>The seas which are turned into blood are the Mediterranean Sea and waters around Europe, the seat of the Antichrist. Not all large bodies of water will be smitten. Note Revelation 6:8. See "Death" on page 95 of this book.

<sup>3</sup>The plague causing domestic waters to become blood is not worldwide. Remember, the remnant of Israel is still hidden among other people somewhere on earth.

– CHAPTER 17 –

# Revelation 18

## The Harlot's Obituary

### *Informational*



The harlot religious company will consist of an amalgamation of all the world's false religions and precedes the emergence of the Antichrist and the False Prophet. We have already discussed this group in great detail in Chapter 14 of this book.

Revelation 18 is a summary of the obituary of the harlot religious system. In the following verse, God calls His people to withdraw from the harlot:

*And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."*

Revelation 18:4

Within the world's religious orders are many God-fearing men and women who have no desire to be part of a harlot church. The Holy Spirit warns these people of the danger and pleads with them to draw away from these religious organizations determinedly moving from God. Consider Paul's statement concerning those people "*having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away*" (II Tim. 3:5, KJV).

The harlot is responsible for "*the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth*" (Rev. 18:24). This includes those people killed during wars. This religious system is so evil that God puts the desire to

utterly destroy her in the hearts of the ten kings. Apparently nuclear weapons are used – the harlot, her city and perhaps multitudes of people are totally destroyed in one hour. Never again will there be events of life in that city.

The harlot is so rich and influential that men who are controlled by the love of money mourn when she is destroyed. They weep and refuse to approach the city's fearful site.

Many previously believed the headquarters city of the harlot to be a port city due to statements in this chapter. However, with satellite television, this is not necessarily so.

– CHAPTER 18 –

# Revelation 19

## *Heaven and Earth*



### HEAVEN AT MID-TRIBULATION

The description of heaven rejoicing over the destruction of the harlot places the opening events of Revelation 19 after mid-Tribulation.

*After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.”*

*Again they said, “Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!”*

*And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, “Amen! Alleluia!”*

*Then a voice came from the throne, saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!”*

*And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”*

*And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

*Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

#### Revelation 19:1-9

The story developing around God's throne continues.<sup>1</sup> Heaven is the site of the Marriage of the Lamb and Marriage Supper. An enormous number of people in heaven offer statements of praise, thanksgiving and glory to God, revealing His judgments to be righteous. He judged the great harlot, which corrupted the earth with her fornications, and avenged His servants' blood which she shed. This praise and worship is also preparation for the Marriage of the Lamb.

The group worshiping at God's throne is composed of the Church company, the Great Multitude, and the 144,000 Jewish evangelists. From the information given to us in Revelation 14:1-5, we can properly place the 144,000 Jewish evangelists in the heavenly scene.

After the 144,000 finish their assignment, Jesus meets them at Mount Zion to escort them to heaven. Mount Zion is a location both on earth and in heaven (Heb. 12:22-24). Jesus meets the 144,000 on the earthly Zion in Jerusalem. Because the 144,000 are part of the group worshiping before God's throne, described in verses 1-3, we know that Jesus escorts them to heaven. Remember, we interpret literally unless figures of speech or types are used within the context.

The 144,000 are still on earth during the five months of the plague of locusts (Rev. 9:3-4). From this we know it is during the second half of the Tribulation that they are raptured. Once in heaven they join the Church company already there and together sing the new song of the redeemed! Chronologically, this places the Wedding and Wedding Supper after the

rapture of the 144,000 (Rev. 14:1-5).

John declares what a blessed time this is in heaven: *“Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! . . . These are the true sayings of God”* (verse 9).

## **MAN'S LIMITED KNOWLEDGE**

We can accept the information recorded in the Scriptures as the absolute **true sayings of God** without making an exhaustive study. Such a study on any portion of God’s Word is impossible because no human possesses total knowledge.

If man had total knowledge, he would think himself God, causing great trouble. God chose to share limited knowledge with man, giving each of His ministers a special insight into His Word. Everyone should have a general working knowledge of the Word with areas of special interest.

Paul instructs one to *study* the Word. Carefully examine Second Timothy 2:15. Study requires more than *just reading* the Holy Scriptures.

## **THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY**

*And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”*

Revelation 19:10

John closes this portion of his description of heaven’s future events with this: *“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”* Discovering this statement helped me in understanding part of Paul’s teachings concerning the gift of prophecy. (See I Cor. 12.) Paul indicates that all may prophesy, but individually and in order (I Cor. 14).

*“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”* Every born-again believer has a testimony of Jesus. By sharing one’s delightful experience, they set forth an example and are prophesying of what can happen to the hearer. So when one shares his personal testimony, the spirit of prophecy comes upon him. Beginning in Genesis 3:15, prophecy points to Jesus the Messiah.

## **HEAVEN AND EARTH AT JESUS' RETURN**

Verse 11 begins a transition from heaven back to earth. In the remainder of the chapter both stories are combined.

### **THE WHITE HORSE RIDER**

*Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.*

Revelation 19:11

This verse describes the Lord Jesus riding a white horse in His return to earth. Although the personal identity of the Revelation 6 white horse rider is cloaked, we know that he will become the Antichrist. The Revelation 19 white horse rider is easily identifiable as Jesus. He is called *“Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.”*

This statement that our God of love makes war surprises many people. An examination of God’s Word reveals that He has made war on several occasions. God’s nature is not only one of unfailing love, but of fierce indignation, fury and jealousy. He firmly allows no acquittal of the wicked and is a God of vengeance.

Study the Scriptures to examine every aspect of God’s character. Even though God’s major characteristic is love, especially toward those who want His love, He is well-rounded.

God delights in being our Father and friend. It is much better to meet Him in His love than in His wrath. Never forget His love causes Him to be long suffering, kind and slow to anger.

## **THE EVIL ARMIES' DESTRUCTION**

The description of Jesus continues:

*His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.*

*Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

Revelation 19:12-15

The “winepress” of the above passage is the same one of Revelation 14:19-20. Jesus treads the winepress, destroying the great oriental army and the Antichrist’s evil forces at Armageddon.

*And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Revelation 19:16

Verses 12-16 contain a magnificent description of Jesus’ literal return to earth. He stands upon the Mount of Olives, and using the two-edged Sword (God’s Word) speaks into existence the plague that destroys the vast armies (Zech. 14:4, 12).

*Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud*

*voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”*

*And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.*

*Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

*And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.*

Revelation 19:17-21

The fowls of the air are called to clean up the battlefield. This ends the Battle of Armageddon, which takes only one hour.

Jesus walks from the Mount of Olives through the little Valley of Kidron and onto the temple mount to assume control of all governments. (Isa. 9:6.)<sup>2</sup> He is proclaimed Lord of lords, King of kings, and the Prince of Peace. (Zechariah 14 also clearly depicts Jesus as “King” and “Lord.”) Then He begins His wonderful 1,000-year reign of peace and righteousness on earth. The Antichrist and False Prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire to begin their eternal punishment.

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<sup>1</sup>Notice that the events described are heavenly, not earthly. The Church

will have been caught up long before. (See Luke 21:36; John 14:3; II Thess. 2:3, 6-8; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; 12:22-24; Rev. 4:1-2.)

<sup>2</sup>Although Scriptures do not specifically state that Jesus will be proclaimed King on the temple mount, no other place is more suitable. Solomon and Zerubbabel built temples on Mount Moriah, and the future temple of Zechariah 6 must be in the same location. This site is revered by nearly all Jews. Jesus was no exception. He often was either on the Mount of Olives overlooking the temple mount or in Jerusalem on the temple mount.

– CHAPTER 19 –

# Revelation 20

## The Millennium

### *Earth and Heaven*



Revelation 20 opens with the continuation of the earthly story, then with verse 11 returns to the heavenly scene.

### **SATAN IMPRISONED**

*Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.*

*He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.*

Revelation 20:1-3

The above verse contains all scriptural terms used to identify the Devil: *dragon, serpent, Satan* and *Devil*. After the Antichrist and False Prophet are cast into the lake of fire, a great strong angel (probably Michael) arrests and binds Satan.

No mercy is shown Satan. He fully deserves the punishment of being cast into the bottomless pit with a seal set upon him to secure his imprisonment. At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan is loosed for a short season. (We will

examine the reason for Satan's brief release later in this Chapter.) The time frame of his imprisonment corresponds with Christ's reign of peace and righteousness on earth.

## **THE SAINTS RULE WITH JESUS**

*And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.*

Revelation 20:4

The above verse describes many occupied "thrones"! The righteous return with Jesus to administer His earthly kingdom for 1,000 years. They receive their assignments for future duties while in heaven around God's throne.

During this reign, a theocratic government exists, a perfect administration. There are no attorneys, political parties, labor unions or ungodly authorities. All positions of authority, from the local level to the highest government official, are filled by the saints who have returned with Jesus. You or someone you know may be king of the United States!

## **AN ERA OF HEALTH AND PEACE**

Satan's imprisonment negates his earthly operation. Since he is a major cause of death, sickness and temptation, these become almost nonexistent. However, his presence is not necessary for temptation or sin! (James 1:14-15).

Longevity of life is restored to those who have not received glorified bodies. Born-again mortals will live forever and, all mortals will replenish the new earth. After all, that was God's original plan and it was perfect. Satan spoiled the plan, but God restores it.

*"No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old*

*man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.”*

Isaiah 65:20

If one were to die at 100 years old, that person would still be considered a child. Any death during the Millennium results from sin begun in unrighteous people and their failure to repent.

Peace extends to all animals. *“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together”* (Isa. 11:6). Any creatures turned natural enemies by Adam’s fall are reconciled. Parents need not worry about their children. Even if a child should reach into the hole of a serpent, he will not be bitten.

*Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

Revelation 20:4

This verse describes the martyred saints of the Tribulation discovered when the fifth seal is opened. Resurrected on the first day of the Millennium, they take their place with the Lord’s victorious company, fully avenged.

## **THE RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED DEAD**

The wicked dead from the time of Adam are resurrected at the end of the 1,000 years of peace. At that time, God judges all the wicked at the Great White Throne Judgment.

During the Millennium, God continues reaching out to the survivors of the Tribulation who did not bow to the Antichrist. Rather than destroying them,

God offers them salvation.<sup>1</sup> They live in peace and righteousness, and multiply upon the earth. God gives all men every opportunity to receive Jesus, waiting until after the Millennium ends to judge the wicked.

## **THE FIRST RESURRECTION**

*But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*

Revelation 20:5

The first resurrection includes four raptures, or translations, and all resurrections (three), except the resurrection of the wicked dead.

Before the Tribulation begins, the Church is caught up. This involves the resurrection of the dead in Christ, which includes the Old Testament saints (I Cor. 10:1-4) and the catching up of the living Christians. These two acts form one major event (I Thess. 4:16-18).

Next, at mid-Tribulation, the Great Multitude, the converts of the 144,000, are caught away to remove them from the path of the Antichrist's wrath (Rev. 7:9-17). When their ministry is completed some months later, the 144,000 Jewish evangelists are taken up (Rev. 14:1-5).

On the final day of the Tribulation (also the first day of the Millennium) the Two Witnesses are resurrected and taken up (Rev. 11:3-12). Later in that day, the martyred Tribulation saints are resurrected (Rev. 20:4). The first resurrection is comprised of these seven distinct events.

## **SATAN IS RELEASED**

*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

*Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.*

*They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.*

*The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

Revelation 20:6-10

The Four Horsemen of Revelation 6, the 200 million-man Oriental army, the plagues and the Battle of Armageddon will have destroyed hundreds of millions of the earth's population. Those who remain and have not yet accepted Jesus are those over whom He will reign with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15) or firm authority. These people must be cared for, ministered to, and once again be made part of a productive society.

Many nations are saved during the Millennium (Rev. 21:24). However, even those who are not saved must worship Jesus during this time (Zech. 14:16-17). The people who do not receive Jesus as Savior and Lord have an opportunity to follow Satan when he is released from the bottomless pit at the end of the 1,000-year period.

Satan goes about the earth to deceive as many nations as possible. He gathers a large following of people and leads them against the camp of the saints and the Holy City Jerusalem.

God sends fire from heaven to end this strange battle, moving so swiftly that it is as though the battle never actually occurs. Satan is again taken captive, then cast into the lake of fire where the Antichrist and False Prophet

have been for 1,000 years. The only people left alive on the earth are the saints from all time periods, the righteous mortal remnant of Israel, those mortals saved through the ministry of angels, and the mortals of nations saved during Christ's reign.

Do not confuse the terms *Gog* and *Magog* of Revelation 20 with their use in Ezekiel 38 and 39. In Ezekiel's prophecies, Gog and Magog represent a great northern power identifiable as Russia from the geographical areas described. This prophecy of Ezekiel 38 began to be fulfilled with the restoration of the nation of Israel. The Gog and Magog of Revelation 20 are gathered together from all over the earth and are destroyed.

Why is Satan released from the bottomless pit? Our God is a just God; He releases Satan for a short span of time, perhaps a few weeks. Satan immediately begins to tempt the people who have lived during the reign of our Lord Jesus. Understand that from the time of Adam, everyone has been tempted by Satan and provided an opportunity to overcome him. Were Satan not released at the end of the Millennium to tempt those people (not the righteous Church), all those who had previously yielded to Satan and were lost could accuse God of being unjust.

## **THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGEMENT**

With verse 11, the scene changes from earth to the throne room in heaven:

*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.*

*And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.*

*The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades*

*delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.*

*Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

#### Revelation 20:11-15

In this final resurrection, the wicked dead of all ages are resurrected to stand before God's throne. No one is left on earth, and hell is emptied.

While this judgment is taking place in heaven, the earth, and the heavens surrounding earth, are destroyed. God, as Judge, sits on His throne. At the scene are the wicked of all the ages awaiting judgment. Also present are the righteous of all the ages. Once again, the vast company of angels are gathered for this august event.

Waiting to be judged are the fallen angels. Paul refers to these angels in Jude 6: *"And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day."* First Corinthians 6:3 clearly states that the angels who did not keep their first estate will be judged by you and me, the Church. God judges fallen mankind while we judge fallen angels at the Great White Throne Judgment.

A question has been asked based on First Corinthians

6:2. That question is: *When do the saints judge the world?* The answer is: *during the millennial reign of Jesus.* At that time the Church will be ruling the world under Jesus as kings and priests. With vested authority, we will judge the world. God judges the unrighteous according to their works recorded in the book He opens. Afterwards, He assigns them to their final place of punishment, the lake of fire. This is the second death, a state of eternal death!

What little God's Word tells us about the lake of fire is enough to reveal that no person in their right mind would want to be eternally cast into it. The Hebrew and Greek languages reveal the lake of fire to be a place of non-consuming fire, brimstone, and vicious turbulence.

## **THE NEW HEAVEN, NEW EARTH, AND NEW JERUSALEM**

After the Great White Throne Judgment, God is ready to bring about the next phase of His majestic plan: the new heaven, new earth, and New Jerusalem.

Peter describes the destruction of the earth and its immediate heavens which takes place during the final judgment:

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

II Peter 3:10

God creates a new earth surrounded by a new heaven where His kingdom continues forever.

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<sup>1</sup>The nations of Revelation 21:24-26 are saved during the Millennium. We know this because no unrighteousness can carry over onto the new earth.

# Part VI



# **The Prophecy**

## **Conclusion**

**New Heaven,  
New Earth,  
New Jerusalem**

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– CHAPTER 20 –

# Revelation 21

## *Informational*



Revelation 21 opens with John’s description of the new heaven, new earth and New Jerusalem. Containing no large bodies of water, the new earth is larger in land area than the former earth.

*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

Revelation 21:1-2

Only righteous people live on the new earth. The following verse categorizes the unrighteous people who will suffer eternally in the lake of fire:

*“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”*

Revelation 21:8

Each of the letters to the seven churches of Asia contains statements to the overcomer, as does the following passage. God has tremendous plans for the company of overcomers.

*And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the*

*tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

*“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”*

*Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”*

Revelation 21:3-7

## **THE BRIDE OF CHRIST**

*Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”*

Revelation 21:9

Throughout generations, it has been generally accepted and taught that the *Church* is “the Bride of Christ.” Is this teaching true, or is it a major tradition without biblical support?

I ask in good faith that, before reaching your conclusion, you examine all the associated biblical references thoroughly, allowing the Scripture to speak for itself.

There can be no argument as to the present identity of the Church. According to the apostle Paul, the *Church* is the “Body of Christ,” of which *Christ* is the “Head.” (See Rom. 12:5; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:11-16; Col. 1:18.)

Please keep in mind that the terms *Church* and *Body of Christ* are interchangeable throughout Scripture. Also remember that although Jesus laid the foundation for the Church (Rom. 15:20; I Cor. 3:10-12) and is the Foundation as well as the Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20), it was the apostle Paul to whom the revelation of the Church was given. Paul clearly establishes himself as “*an apostle to the Gentiles*” (Rom. 11:13).

I have learned through this study the difference between *identity* and *relationship*. Too often, believers have confused the two. When they have a wrong identity, it is not likely they will develop a proper relationship with Jesus.

For as long as I can remember, it has been said that the Church is the Bride of Christ. This teaching has been based on the following Scripture references: Matthew 25:1-13, John 3:29, and Ephesians 5:24-30. Notice that *not one* of the above references identifies the Church as the Bride of Christ. As a matter of fact, there is not one verse of Scripture which states the Church is the Bride.

What then must we conclude? Apparently, the Church has been given an *identity* that is incorrect. This identity is based on assumption or what one may call a “type” or “shadow.” It is true that there are many types and shadows in the Scriptures from which we receive insight. However, doctrine cannot be established on types and shadows.

The teaching that the Church is the Bride of Christ has become a doctrine within the Body of Christ without strong or clear support. This teaching has been around for so many years that it has become traditional. Once a tradition has been established, it is difficult to remove. In fact, people will fight over their traditions. It is certainly understandable that I would arouse opposition in questioning this traditional doctrine. How could so many men and women of God teach a tradition and overlook the soundness of the Word?

Perhaps an interpretation of Isaiah 54:5 has clouded our thinking. It says, “*For your Maker is your husband.*” There can be no mistake that God is the

husband of the people of Israel as is so declared within that chapter. One could conclude that since God is married to Israel, then Jesus would take the Church as His Bride.

However, allow me to remind you that we are wrestling with *identity* versus *relationship* for the Church.

After serious study of all the Scriptures, which seem to give the Church a “bride identity,” I discovered that all those references were teaching *relationship*, not *identity*.

In Matthew 25, had the foolish virgins maintained a right relationship with the Bridegroom, they would not have been excluded from the marriage chamber. No one questions Jesus being the Bridegroom, but I must question that the virgins, wise or foolish, were to be the Bride. In the truest sense, they were *friends* of the Bridegroom. Some had maintained an up-to-date relationship with Him, while others had not.

Consider John 3:29 in which John the Baptist, speaking of Jesus, makes a profound statement: “*He who has the bride is the bridegroom.*” Apparently there were people who thought John the Baptist to be the Christ. Why would anyone think that?

Remember, John was the first direct voice from God to the Israelites after the ministry of Malachi more than 400 years before. During that period, the people had the writings of Moses and the prophets with which to direct themselves. However, the priesthood was virtually backslidden, and idolatry was an everyday form of religion. Few of the people remained true to God.

Among the faithful were the priest Zacharias, and his wife, Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-25). Zacharias and Elizabeth were quite old when their son, John, was born. Among the youth who still loved and worshiped God were Mary and Joseph.

Now back to John’s statement. Notice he said, “*He [Jesus] who has*

[“*hath*” KJV] *the bride is the bridegroom.*” The word “*has*” (“*hath*” in KJV is the archaic form) is the present indicative of “have.” “Have” in this verse indicates possession. The remainder of John’s statement recognizes the friends of the Bridegroom as those who stand with Him, hear Him and rejoice. When researching New Testament Church identity, one will find that those who stand, hear and rejoice are identified as the Church.

In Ephesians 5:24-30, carefully notice that these verses are describing the relationship between husband and wife, and do not lend themselves to one’s identity. So John, a follower of Jesus Christ, and therefore a member of the Church, identifies himself as a friend of the Bridegroom. Jesus tells us His disciples also were “friends of the Bridegroom” in Matthew 9:14-15, Mark 2:18-20, and Luke 5:33-35. These Scriptures relate the Church to the Body of Christ, therefore making the Church a definite part of Jesus, the Bridegroom.

The identity of the Church as the Bride of Christ often prevents one, especially men, from ever developing a strong, loving and committed relationship with Jesus.

Throughout his epistles, the apostle Paul not only identifies the Church as the Body of Christ of which Christ is the Head, but he tells us that we wear armor. (See Eph. 6:10-17.) In Second Corinthians 10:4 he instructs us to use those weapons that are “*mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.*” Then he speaks, by the Holy Spirit, to Timothy and identifies him as “*a good soldier of Jesus Christ*” (II Tim. 2:3).

We in the Body of Christ are involved in spiritual warfare. Armor and weapons are necessary and vital to every believer, along with the proper instructions as to how we are to wear and use that which God has supplied. Revelation 19:14 further identifies us as an army, the same company called “*saints*” in Zechariah 14:5. Notice how in both places we are returning to the earth from heaven. We go up to heaven as victorious soldiers and return to earth with the same identity.

What more need I write? It is very evident that we, the Church, are not the

Bride, but rather God's *army* in the world.

Someone has suggested that although we are presently believing soldiers, who are wearing armor and using weapons, we might become the Bride once we are taken up to heaven. My conclusion is based on Revelation 19:14 which shows the saints returning as the army of our Lord Jesus, not as His Bride.

Allow me to strongly urge every believer to recognize our *identity* as the Body of Christ and then work toward developing a wonderful *relationship* with Jesus.

Since it is biblically evident that the Church is not the Bride, then who is? For this information, one must accept the writings in the book of Revelation, chapters 19 and 21.

Revelation 19:7 reads: "*Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.*" The opening verses set the location for the scene and the multitude present. Verse 7 addresses that multitude, making it clear that the Bride and the multitude are not one and the same. Notice also that the Bride, or Lamb's wife, is adorned with "*fine linen . . . the righteous acts of the saints*" (verse 8).

Let us remain with the book of Revelation and proceed with chapter 21.

*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be*

*no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”*

*And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”*

*Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.*

Revelation 21:1-11

Begin carefully to read verse 1 and continue through verse 11. John, by the Holy Spirit, simply declares the city, New Jerusalem, to be the Lamb’s wife, or Bride, according to Revelation 21:2 and 9-10. As you continue the study of chapters 21 and 22, you realize the New Jerusalem is no ordinary city. It cannot be compared with any city built by men.

We are programmed to think of a city as something like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston or the city of our natural birth. However, the New Jerusalem is the city associated with our new birth. It is supernatural and unlike any natural, existing city.

One may reason, *How can a city be the Bride of Christ?* The simplest

answer is: This is the revelation the Holy Spirit gave to John. By faith, we must accept the revelation. Remember, “*we walk by faith, not by sight*” (II Cor. 5:7).

One may say, *I do not understand and I need understanding*. Again, I remind all that we are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8), and no one can explain the new birth any better than the Scripture. We live by faith and, with the faith God has given us, believe the written Word.

If one is not careful, it would be easy to take a “Thomas position” in relationship to the New Jerusalem as the Bride of Christ. Thomas’ position was, “I cannot believe until I have understanding through my natural senses.” (See John 20:25.)

Do not confuse the **identity** of the Church, which is the Body of Christ, with the **relationship** we must develop. Both are made very clear in the Scriptures.

It is possible this teaching about the identity of the Bride crosses swords with your traditional position. If so, only you can decide whether you will stay with tradition or allow the Word of God to speak for itself.

For the present, let us put on the whole armor of God, take up the mighty weapons of God as good soldiers, and by faith carry out our assignment as the army and Body of Christ in this present world.

Whether you agree or disagree with the identity of the Bride of Christ will not affect your salvation, but it could affect your Christian lifestyle. I have met multitudes of Christians who seldom wear armor or use God’s weapons. Rarely do they attack Satan or do his kingdom any harm. In fact, Satan beats, cheats and robs them on a regular basis. The reason for the above condition is the lack of *true identity* and a failure to develop a proper relationship with Jesus.

One last provoking question: *If the Church is the Bride of Christ, as is*

*often taught, why was John shown something different? I rest my case!*<sup>1</sup>

## **THE NEW JERUSALEM**

*And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.*

*Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.*

*Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

Revelation 21:10-14

So the Lamb's Bride, His wife, is the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is occupied by God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Body of Christ (the Church) reigning as kings and priests.

Chronologically, the Wedding of the Lamb and the Marriage Supper occur during the last three years of the Tribulation. The New Jerusalem comes to rest upon the new earth after the Great White Throne Judgment, which follows the Tribulation and the Millennium.

John describes the New Jerusalem as it comes down from God in heaven. The city is majestic – beautiful like a jasper stone! Clear as crystal! It has a great, high wall around it with an angel at each of its twelve gates.

## **ITS OCCUPANTS**

We know a large company of Old and New Testament glorified saints occupy this beautiful city.<sup>2</sup> Three gates are on the east of the city; three on the north, south and west. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written over the gates. The wall of the city has twelve precious stone foundations in which the names of the Lamb's twelve apostles are written. God's plan is magnificent.

## ITS SIZE

*And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.*

Revelation 21:15-16

The New Jerusalem is 1,500 *miles square*, not *square miles*. This is the equivalent of 2,250,000 square miles per level.<sup>3</sup> Los Angeles, the largest American city in land area, covers more than 500 square miles. The New Jerusalem is 1,500 miles north to south, east to west, and 1,500 miles high! If it were placed on the United States, it would fit laterally between the Rocky and Appalachian Mountains, longitudinally between the Canadian border and the Gulf of Mexico. This is not a country or state, but a city – and it is still 1,500 miles high!

Some people preach that so few of us will be in this vast city we might not see another child of God for years. Jesus said His Father's house will be filled. (See Luke 14:16-24.) That enormous city, capable of holding multitudes of people, will be full. What a blessed fellowship this will be!

The Church has a great job to do in this hour! Its members must rid themselves of their fears, frustrations, worldliness and negative attitudes, allowing the Holy Spirit to energize them to work for Jesus!

The city wall is extremely tall:

*Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty- four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.*

Revelation 21:17

“*One hundred and forty-four cubits*” is approximately 216 feet. The height of the city’s wall is equivalent to that of a twenty-two-story building.

## **ITS ELEGANCE**

*The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.*

*The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.”*

Revelation 21:18-21

Twelve magnificent foundations, each formed from a solid precious stone, support the wall made of jasper. Each foundation is garnished with the stones of the other eleven. The city is made of pure gold.

Each gate, made of a single pearl, in a wall that runs 1,500 miles in one direction and stands about twenty-two stories high will be magnificent! The gates will have to be massive to fit architecturally. One theologian speculated that each gate will be 100 miles wide. We will have to wait and see.

The streets are not *paved* with gold, as some songs declare, but *are* pure, solid gold!

## ITS TEMPLE

*But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*

Revelation 21:22

As we saw, Revelation 4:11 states that by God's will all things were created and exist; the *King James Version* translates this verse as God created all things for His pleasure. The overcoming believers who occupy the New Jerusalem are the ones who have brought Him the most pleasure, so He moves right in with them. God and Jesus dwell in the same city with us!

Because of the personal presence of God and Jesus, there is no need for a place of worship in the New Jerusalem. This should not be interpreted to mean that today's believers need no house of worship. God ordered the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temples of Israel in Jerusalem. (See Exod. 25:8; I Kings 6:1-2; Ezra 3.) In these places the very glory of God was manifested.

Early believers met in their homes until either growth or persecution drove them into an open arena. God has used many homes to start fellowships. His plan is for the Body of Christ to grow. If a small group pleases God, it will grow, making a larger sanctuary soon necessary.

The church sanctuary can be a renovated car dealership, a supermarket, a discount store, a large metal building, or a brick structure. Such a place becomes the vital center for worship and teaching around which believers flow in harmony, doing business for God throughout their community. When accompanied with other Believers, one can easily enter into worship.

Knowing human nature better than man does, God has ordained that we Christians should meet in specific houses to worship. The apostle Paul declares that as we see the Day of the Lord approaching, we ought to assemble ourselves together all the more (Heb. 10:25).

Greater assemblies of God's children are appearing in every city. We are learning to love one another, work together, have fellowship, and are finally beginning to experience and teach the same things. The Church is being ministered to by the five-fold ministry which God has set in it for the perfecting of the saints (Eph. 4:11-16).

The strong local Church should operate together rather than splitting into small religious cliques. Often overcome by pride, these "bless me clubs" have no strength to do the Devil much harm and sometimes become the source of erroneous teachings. In coming together, the Church finds protection, soundness, and an abundance of good counsel (Prov. 11:14; Heb. 10:25).

## **ITS SOURCE OF LIGHT**

*The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.*

*And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.*

Revelation 21:23-24

The source of energy for lighting the city is the glory of God and the Lamb, Jesus! They outshine the sun!

We know the New Jerusalem has come from heaven to rest upon the new earth. It is occupied by God the Father, God the Son, and the Church company. The righteous people of the new earth walk in its light and go in and out through its gates. These righteous nations have kings who at appropriate times bring their glory and honor into the city, indicating that these are times of rejoicing and celebration. The people will joyfully anticipate those times as we do our major holidays.

## **ITS RIGHTEOUSNESS**

*Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.*

*But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*

Revelation 21:25-27

Verse 27 of this chapter reveals that those people who defile, work abominations, or lie have already been cast into the lake of fire. They have no part with the new heaven, new earth or New Jerusalem.

Combined together on the new earth are:

1. A righteous people in mortal bodies like Adam and Eve before the Fall, saved during the second half of the Tribulation and the Millennium.
2. The nation of Israel, fully restored during the Millennium, occupied by the natural seed of Abraham in mortal bodies. (See Isa. 35; Ezek. 36:11.)
3. The Church, the Old Testament Saints, the mid-Tribulation saints, the 144,000, the Two Witnesses, all with glorified bodies who will live in New Jerusalem and continue serving as administrators of Jesus' everlasting kingdom.

One must keep in mind that everything God has done was and is perfect. Although Satan hindered God's plan in the Garden of Eden, the plan was no less perfect. The Father chose Abraham and his seed through which to bless all nations. The plan was perfect even though Satan tampered with it.

God preserves every phase of His perfect plan. He does so in the Millennium by having righteous people in mortal bodies and occupying the new earth. He has the seed of Abraham creating a perfect nation called Israel. He has a major company made of believers with glorified bodies. We, as believers, should not allow Satan to overcome us as did Adam and Eve and

the natural seed of Abraham. Our future is too magnificently wonderful to become involved with the beggarly elements of this world.

God has not changed His mind about having a perfect mortal being. Neither has He changed His mind about having a perfect nation of people such as Israel. God is bringing His Church into perfection through the ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11-16). Therefore, we overcome and, as part of the reward, are given glorified bodies so that we are just like Jesus! (See I Cor. 15:51-53; I John 3:1-3.)

God has brought every part of His plan together on the new earth. What a beautiful scene!

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<sup>1</sup>For better understanding, read my book entitled, *The Church, The Bride? The Army? The Truth!*

<sup>2</sup>Because of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, the Old Testament righteous became part of the dead in Christ. (See Matt. 17:1-8; Luke 23:43; I Cor. 10:1-4; Eph. 2:11-16; 4:8.)

<sup>3</sup>Nothing in Scripture gives insight as to how many levels there may be.

– CHAPTER 21 –

# Revelation 22

## *Informational*



*And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

Revelation 22:1-2

This description of the clear water of the River of Life flowing from God's throne shows there is absolutely no pollution in the New Jerusalem, or on the new earth.

The golden street in the New Jerusalem is actually a boulevard. The River of Life flows down the middle of it, and the Trees of Life, the only species of tree in the entire city, grow on both banks. This tree bears twelve kinds of fruit and produces every month. Its fruit is to be eaten by the overcoming believers (Rev. 2:7).

Paul gives us insight into the magnificence of the New Jerusalem. He writes:

*But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

I Corinthians 2:9

## **THE FOOD OF HEAVEN**

Often people ask, “Since our bodies will be glorified, will we eat in heaven?”

Yes, we will eat at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, during the Millennium and in the New Jerusalem. Following His resurrection, Jesus in His glorified body ate fish and bread with His disciples. He even cooked for them.

In heaven we will not eat because we need nourishment or because we are hungry. We will have the pleasure of eating God’s special fruit of the Tree of Life in the New Jerusalem.

## **THE EIGHTH UNKNOWN**

*“The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations”* (Rev. 22:2). Our understanding of this verse is limited. We know that everyone who eats of the Tree of Life will have unending health. (See Gen. 3:22-24.) The nations of this verse are the ones which occupy the new earth and have access to the city. Since there is no sickness or disease, the leaves maintain life as they would have for Adam.

The righteous, serving as kings and priests, possessing total knowledge, will certainly have full understanding as to the healing effect of the leaves of the Tree of Life.

## **KEEP THE SAYINGS OF REVELATION**

*And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.*

*There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever*

*and ever.*

*Then he said to me, “These words are faithful and true.” And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.*

*“Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”*

Revelation 22:3-7

With verse 7, the prophecy that began in Revelation 4 closes. Verses 8 through 21 conclude John’s cover letter of Revelation 1. This letter conveys the final remarks which the Lord directed John to speak to the seven churches in Asia. These statements are also directed to the Church as a whole until the end of the Church Age.

*Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, “See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”*

Revelation 22:8-9

The theme of this book is *Jesus*. The book reveals the last act of God’s master performance. It emphasizes that we are to worship the only true God Who created heaven and earth; the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Peter, James, John and Paul; the God Who gave us the only Savior, Jesus Christ; the God Who provides for those who accept His Son. Worship God – not man!

## **REVELATION IS NOT SEALED**

*And he said to me, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.”*

## Revelation 22:10

Daniel's prophecies were sealed until "*the time of the end.*" That seal has been lifted! The book of Revelation was never sealed. John writes, "*the time is at hand.*" This statement also appears in Revelation 1:3 (KJV). John sent the prophecy to the seven churches with the intention that its distribution be continued. He admonished the churches to keep the things written in the prophecy. This instruction applies to every succeeding generation of the Church.

Until recently, Revelation was approached with intellectualism, carnal understanding or fear. God's Word cannot be interpreted by those means but only by the Holy Spirit. Today we are living in the time of the end, as taught by Daniel in chapter 12. The Holy Spirit is causing a Word explosion. He is correcting our theology, doctrine and attitude. We are growing in God's Word, and our understanding is becoming increasingly more fruitful.

*"He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."*

## Revelation 22:11

The prophecy of this book will not change all unrighteous people into righteous ones or afford the righteous any greater tools than are already available. The prophecy will eventually affect all people. But whether or not they change their course, the prophecy must be declared.

*"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."*

## Revelation 22:12

There are two kinds of judgment – good and bad, in favor or against. The judgment seat of Christ is favorable. When one is raptured, he has already been judged righteous and victorious, ready for the event. No one will be

raptured unless God's favor is already upon him.

When Jesus comes to catch up His own, He brings their rewards with Him. This is a judgment of rewards, so go to work! No one is saved by works, but works determine the reward of the righteous.

*“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”*

*Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.*

*But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.”*

Revelation 22:13-15

Here is another passage which indicates the unrighteous will not inhabit the new earth. The statements in this verse and Revelation 21:8, 27 are warnings to those who habitually participate in the activities described.

## **DO NOT ALTER THE WORD**

*“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”*

*And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*

*For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part*

*from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

Revelation 22:16-19

This passage contains a strong admonition not to tamper with any part of God's Word. Since Revelation is tied into both the Old and New Testaments, this warning covers the entire Bible.

Declaring that part of the Word has been done away with or that certain portions are not for us today is tampering with the Word. Such action is flirting with disaster.

## **GOD'S LOVE IS WITH US**

*He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

Revelation 22:20-21

The book of Revelation closes on a magnificent note: It assures us of Jesus' glorious return and reminds us that His love is constantly with us while we await the event. Let us grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord unto full maturity, in which there are no divisions, and enjoy unity of faith and complete knowledge of the Son of God.

# Conclusion



We have joyfully discovered that Revelation is a continuation of the New Testament description of Jesus and His ministry, not a volume of doom and gloom. The Antichrist, False Prophet and mark of the Beast are no threat to the glorious Church and are of minor importance in the story of God's master performance.

The book of Revelation has proven itself to be the exciting last chapter, final act, and grand finale of the most successful Book in existence – the Holy Bible.

# About the Author: John the Revelator



John the Revelator is none other than the apostle John, the beloved apostle. Who better to write this book than John?

John was one of the inner-circle disciples with Peter and James. One discovers, however, that John was probably closer to our Lord Jesus than the other two. It was not that Jesus loved him more but that John chose to be closer to Him.

John has given us the beloved Gospel of John, which seems to stand out because of its loving revelation of Jesus. John captures God's love and divine provisions for the believer as does no other gospel writer. Through all of John's writing, Jesus is divinely described for you and me.

The Holy Spirit later used John to give us three marvelously wonderful epistles: First, Second and Third John. These epistles are filled with truths which are vital to everyday Christian living. John teaches us to love one another so we may fulfill the prayer of our Lord Jesus found in the Gospel of John, chapter 17.

In John's very old age (ninety-three to ninety-six), he was still being used by God in a very dramatic way. We cannot be absolute on John's age, but it is generally accepted that he was in his mid-nineties when God permitted him to pen the book of Revelation. Senior citizens can be of great value to God and to the Church. By the time one becomes a senior, he should have learned much about God, His plan, His methods, His great love, and possess Godly wisdom.

John was well-suited to author the book of Revelation. He could handle this insight into the future, which does reveal the outpouring of God's wrath. Because of the manner in which John was developed by the Holy Spirit, he was able to always cause God's love to be seen, even during the time when God releases His fierce wrath.

Although Jesus is the subject of the book of Revelation, the love of God is strong throughout the entire prophetic message. The advance warnings found throughout the prophecy, especially chapters 8, 9 and 16, reveal God's love. Thus, God's end-time love letter to mankind.

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# Appendixes

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– APPENDIX 1 –

# The Unknowns of Revelation



The unknowns are not explained anywhere within scriptural context. Therefore, understanding is withheld until our knowledge is complete. When we see Jesus, we will be like Him, as stated in First John 3:2. Then we shall have total knowledge.

1. The significance of the four creatures' strange appearance (Rev. 4).
2. The personal identity of the white horse's rider (Rev. 6).
3. The reason for the half hour of silence (Rev. 8).
4. The nature and purpose of the seven thunders (Rev. 10:3-4).
5. John's future ministry (Rev. 10:11).
6. The personal identity of the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11).
7. The area covered by the wilderness where the Israeli remnant is hidden and the origin of the eagle's wings (Rev. 12:14).
8. The exact effect of the leaves of the Tree of Life (Rev. 22:2).

NOTE: One may speculate concerning the above subjects, but remember, personal speculation is not "Thus sayeth the Lord." Never substitute speculation for absolute biblical statement. Speculation is always based on what is **not known** of the subject under consideration.

– APPENDIX 2 –

# The Chronological Outline of the Book of Revelation



Rev. 1-3

Introduction and message to the seven churches.

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Rev. 4-5

Catching up of the Church.

Scene before God's throne.

Identification of the twenty-four elders.

Jesus' receiving the book with seven seals.

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Rev. 6

Opening the first six seals.

The first: White horse – Antichrist.

The second: Red horse – war, World War III (Ezek. 38-39).

The third: Black horse – famine.

The fourth: Pale horse – Death (accompanied by Hell).

The fifth: Martyred Tribulation saints.

The sixth: Upheaval of nature reserved until end of Tribulation.

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Rev. 7

Two groups revealed.

The 144,000 Jewish evangelists who begin ministry early in Tribulation's first year (verses 1-8; Rev. 14:1-5; Ezek. 9:4).

The Great Multitude (mid-Tribulation saints) caught up to God's throne (verse 9).

Mid-Tribulation. (See Appendix 3.)

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Rev. 8-10

Seventh seal: Ushers in seven trumpet judgments.

First-Fourth: Plagues used intermittently throughout last 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years.

Fifth: First woe – Demon locusts, no death, five month duration (Rev. 9).

Sixth: Second woe – Eastern army destroyed at Armageddon (Rev. 9).

Seventh: Third woe – Reserved until end of Tribulation (Rev. 11).

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Rev. 11-13

Two Witnesses (Rev. 11).

Israel remnant escapes to wilderness (Rev. 12).

Mark of the Beast (Rev. 13).

Angelic ministry (Rev. 8:13; 14:6-20).

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Rev. 14

The 144,000 finish ministry and appear with Christ.

No further reference in story.

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Rev. 15-16

Last seven plagues occur during last four days of Tribulation.

Insight to Armageddon (Rev. 14:14-20; 16:16; 19:11-21; Zech. 14).

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Rev. 17-18

The harlot of these chapters identifies the world's religious system.

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Rev. 19

Christ returns with His saints (Zech. 14:5; Rev. 17:14.).

Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-21; Zech. 14).

Antichrist and False Prophet cast into lake of fire (Rev. 19:20).

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Rev. 20

1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth.

Martyrs are resurrected.

Saints reign as kings and priests.

Satan is bound for 1,000 years.

Israel is totally restored (Isa. 35; Ezek. 36).

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Rev. 20:7-10

Release of Satan.

Final battle with Satan.

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Rev. 20:11-15

Final resurrection of wicked dead.

Great White Throne Judgment.

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Rev. 21-22

New Jerusalem, new heaven, and new earth.

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(Events which begin at mid- Tribulation.)

3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>Years

(Horsemen ride throughout Tribulation.)

Seven years of Tribulation (also called Daniel's 70th Week or Jacob's trouble).<sup>1</sup>

NOTE: The Chronological Outline of the Book of Revelation came to me by the Holy Spirit while I was pastoring Faith Memorial Church in Houston, Texas on a summer afternoon in 1967.

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<sup>1</sup>Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7) refers to the last half of the seven-year period.

– APPENDIX 3 –

# Mid-Tribulation Events



- Antichrist breaks agreement with Israel (Dan. 9:24-27).
- Tribulation saints (Jews and Gentiles) caught up and escape wrath of Antichrist (Rev. 7:9-17) and also escape mid-Tribulation wrath of God – second half.
- Upheaval of nature. (Rev. 8:5). Not to be mistaken for upheaval of Revelation 6:12-14.
- Antichrist moves against Israel; remnant of Israel hidden away (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15-21; Mark 13:14-20; Rev. 11:2; 12:13-17).
- Antichrist destroys the religious system: world church, harlot (Rev. 17:16-18).
- Antichrist declares himself God (II Thess. 2:3-4).
- False Prophet introduces idolatry – worship of the image (Rev. 13:14-15).
- False Prophet introduces mark of the Beast and attempts to control commerce (Rev. 13:16-18).
- Two Witnesses begin ministry (Rev. 11).
- Angelic ministry begins (Rev. 14:6-9).
- Plagues begin (Rev. 8-9) – controlled by the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:6).
- Seventh seal opened (Rev. 8). 264

– APPENDIX 4 –

# Nature's Upheaval During the Tribulation



1. At Tribulation's beginning. (Occurs during World War III which follows the Rapture of the Church.)
  - A. Earthquake (Ezek. 38:19-20).
  - B. Thunder, lightning (Rev. 4:5).\*
2. At mid-Tribulation.
  - A. Earthquake (Rev. 8:5).\*
3. On Tribulation's final day.
  - A. Opening of sixth seal (reserved until this time) (Rev. 6:12-17).
  - B. At resurrection of Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:13, 19).
  - C. At time of Armageddon (Zech. 14:4, 6-8).
  - D. Pouring out of seventh vial (Rev. 16:17-21).
  - E. Jesus refers to the same upheaval at the end of the Tribulation (Matt. 24:29).

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\*Capturing the attention of mankind.

– APPENDIX 5 –

## Summary:

# Last Day of the Great Tribulation and First Day of the 1,000-Year Reign of Christ



- On the last day of the Tribulation, a tremendous upheaval of nature occurs (Rev. 6:12-14; 11:13-19; 16:18-21). A great earthquake alters the shape of the earth, perhaps returning the earth to its rightful position on its axis (see Isa. 13:13).
- The Two Witnesses, slain 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> days previously and left lying in the streets of Jerusalem, are miraculously brought back to life. Men actually hear God’s voice as He calls the Two Witnesses back to His throne (Rev. 11:7-12).
- The world is thrown into tremendous fear because on this day *“there will be no light; the lights will diminish. It shall be one day which is known to the Lord – neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light”* (Zech. 14:6-7).
- Jesus returns as the King of kings and Lord of lords with His saints to battle against the Antichrist and his armies in the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:16, 19). The armies of the evil one are destroyed in a horrible manner (Zech. 14:9, 12). Satan is bound by an angel and cast into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3).
- The Tribulation’s last day marks the first day of the Millennium, Jesus’ 1,000-year reign of peace. During the Millennium, Jesus and His saints rule over all the nations. Zechariah 14:16 reveals that within the nations controlled by the Antichrist, there are people who have not taken his

mark nor worshiped the image of the Beast. On this last day of the Tribulation and first day of the Millennium, the saved remnant of Israel (Rev. 11:13) is gathered from its hiding place and the Tribulation martyrs are resurrected (Rev. 20:4).

- The 1,000-year reign of Christ is one of total peace and righteousness, in which much restoration of the earth takes place. The nation of Israel is restored to its original estate (Gen. 15:18; Ezek. 36:11; 37:15-26; Acts 3:20-21).

NOTE: David will reign as King over Israel (Ezek. 37:21-24; Jer. 30:9).

– APPENDIX 6 –

# Chronological Development of the Beast System (Rev. 12,13,17,18; Dan. 2, 7)



## A. The Original Heads.

1. Babylon (Egypt).

2. Assyria.

3. Babylon.

a. Daniel's prophecy begins (Dan. 2).

4. Medo-Persia.

5. Greece.

6. Rome.

a. Mortally wounded and later revived as the seventh head of the system (Rev. 13).\*

b. The first coming of Jesus brings the Church Age into existence – Jesus is the stone that destroys the image of Daniel 2:35 (which is all the above empires).

c. The Church being caught up ends the Church Age.

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## B. The Final Heads.

1. European Union.

a. Ten horns – began in 1957.

b. Prophetically identifiable in 1981.

c. January 1, 1993 – goal to enter world marketplace as the United States of Europe, ONE European Nation of States.

**Members of the European Union** (formerly the Common Market):

1957 – France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Belgium.

1973 – United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark.

1981 – Greece.

1986 – Spain, Portugal.

1995 – Austria, Finland, Sweden.

2004 – Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia.

2007 – Bulgaria, Romania.

As of this writing, candidate countries are: Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

2. **Antichrist.** Final 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years of the Tribulation – ten horns.

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\*The Beast's heads are empires. The Roman Empire, a combination of the other heads, became the whole system. It requires a shrewd Antichrist to assemble the governments, commerce, and religions of the Beast to resurrect

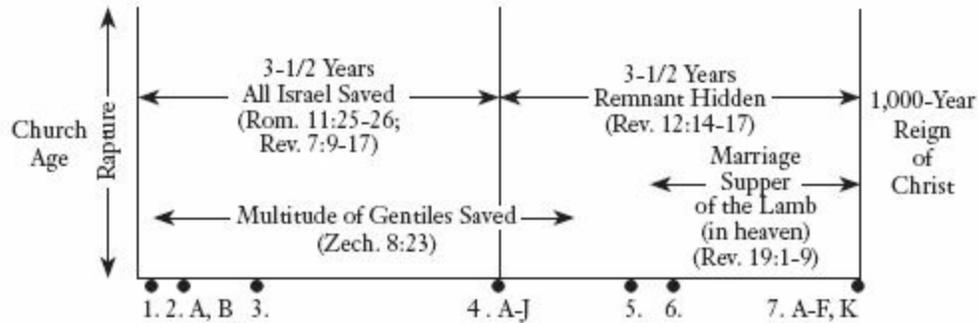
it. The total system, not just the Roman Empire, is revived.

– APPENDIX 7 –

# The Seven-Year Tribulation Period



## I. Daniel's 70th Week (Dan. 9:24-27).



1. Rapture of the Church and Old Testament saints (Luke 21:36; John 14:3; I Thess. 4:16-18; II Thess. 2:1-9; Rev. 4:1-3).
2. Opening of the Seals (Rev. 6).\*
  - A. Release of the Antichrist (Dan. 9:24-27; Rev. 6:1-2).
  - B. Destruction of Russia, World War III (Ezek. 38-39; Rev. 6:3-4).
3. Selection of the 144,000 and the beginning of their ministry (Ezek. 9:1-6; Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5).\*
4. Mid-Tribulation.
  - A. Agreement broken with Israel (Dan. 9:24-27).
  - B. Rapture of the Great Multitude (Rev. 7:9-17).
  - C. Upheaval of nature (Rev. 8:5).
  - D. Antichrist moves against Israel (Dan. 9; Matt. 24:15).
  - E. Antichrist destroys the harlot (Rev. 17:16-18).
  - F. Antichrist press conference (II Thess. 2:3-4).
  - G. Mark of the Beast introduced (Rev. 13:16-18).

H. Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:3-12).

I. Ministry of angels (Rev. 14:6-10).

J. Plagues (Rev. 8-9).

K. Christ and righteous return to reign – Millennium.

5. Rapture of the 144,000 (Rev. 14:1-5).

6. Marriage of the Lamb (in heaven) (Rev. 19:1-9).

7. Seven last plagues occur during the final four days of the Tribulation (Rev. 16).

8. Final Day.

A. Rapture of the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:3-12).

B. Christ returns (Zech. 14; Rev. 19).

C. Armageddon (Rev. 19:19-21).

D. Antichrist and False Prophet cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20).

E. Satan bound (Rev. 20:1-3).

F. Christ reigns (Isa. 9:6; Rev. 20:4).

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\* The events of figures 2 and 3 all occur at the beginning of the Tribulation.

## II. Terms *Last Days* and *Time of the End* Cover the Tribulation.



The seven years designated by Daniel 9:24-27 correspond to the same period of time covered in the book of Revelation and identified by Jesus in Matthew 24 as the “Tribulation.”

These seven years are an exact period of time (84 months or 2,520 days) divided into two equal halves of 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years (42 months or 1,260 days). Each month of that time is exactly thirty days long.

### “AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS”

Besides the phrases *last days* and *time of the end*, there is another prophetic term I want to consider: “*And it shall come to pass.*” We find these words 131 times in both Old and New Testaments.

God spoke through Joel:

*“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.”*

Joel 2:28

Whenever God says, “*And it shall come to pass,*” the words which follow that term are more sure and certain to occur than the rising and setting of the sun.

No one ever questions the rising and setting of the sun. No one has ever asked, “Now that the sun is up, will it go down?” Such thoughts never go through our minds.

From the time God created the sun and set it into action, it has risen and set every day (with the one exception given in Josh. 10:13).

We never think about such things because they are absolutes. The same is true regarding God's prophetic Word. If God said it, it will come to pass. These days we are witnessing the action of God's Word as it comes to pass.

An elementary knowledge of Bible prophecy enables us to begin to realize how important are the fulfillments of the prophecies of the Scriptures. There can be no doubt that God is having His way. The Bible is literally coming to pass.

– APPENDIX 8 –

# Three Phases of Activity



## A. SEALS (Rev. 6).

1. White horse rider –Antichrist.
2. Red horse – war.
3. Black horse – famine (terrible, but not worldwide).
4. Pale horse – Death and Hell.
5. Martyred Tribulation saints.
6. The most severe upheaval of nature (on the Tribulation’s final day).
7. Prepares the way for the sounding of the seven trumpets (Rev. 8:1).

## B. TRUMPETS (Rev. 8-9, 11).

1. Hail, fire, blood (rain).
2. Oceans become one-third blood.
3. Domestic water becomes one-third poisoned.
4. Darkness of one-third of the sun’s, moon’s and stars’ light.
5. Plague of demon-driven locusts.
6. Movement of vast Oriental army.
7. Last angelic trumpet – Battle of Armageddon, return of Jesus Christ.

## C. VIALS (Rev. 16).

1. Boils (painful sores).
2. Oceans become totally blood. Mediterranean Sea, not all bodies of water

worldwide.

3. Domestic water becomes totally blood. Only in European, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern areas.
4. Heat of sun increased.
5. Total darkness of sun, moon and stars over Antichrist's kingdom.
6. The way of the Oriental army is prepared for its destruction at Armageddon.
7. Upheaval of nature (fulfillment of events resulting from opening of sixth seal) (Rev. 6:12-14).

– APPENDIX 9 –

# Chapter Subjects of Revelation



**Chapter 1** Introduction, John's cover letter to the seven churches of Asia.

**Chapter 2** Letters to the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira.

**Chapter 3** Letters to the churches of Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea.

**Chapter 4\*** John caught up. He experiences the Rapture in proper order of events.

**Chapter 5\*** The scroll with the seven seals.

(In **Chapter 4\*** and **Chapter 5\*** The heavenly story begins to unfold.)

**Chapter 6†** Opening of the seals – beginning of earthly events during the Tribulation.

**Chapter 7†** 144,000 and their converts – God's intervention.

**Chapter 8†** Sounding of the trumpets.

(**Chapter 8†** and **Chapter 9†** are a continuation of earthly events during Tribulation.)

**Chapter 9†** Plague of locusts, Oriental army.

**Chapter 10†** Seven thunders, John's future.

**Chapter 11†** Two Witnesses, seventh angelic trumpet.

**Chapter 12†** Sun-clothed woman, man child, hidden remnant.

**Chapter 13‡** Seven-headed Beast – the system, Antichrist, False Prophet.

**Chapter 14‡** 144,000 caught up, angelic ministry, preview of Armageddon.

**Chapter 15‡** Introduction to Revelation 16.

**Chapter 16†** Last seven plagues – earthly events.

**Chapter 17‡** The harlot.

**Chapter 18‡** The harlot's obituary.

**Chapter 19\*†** Christ returns, Armageddon – the Triumph.

**Chapter 20\*†** Satan bound, 1,000-year reign, Great White Throne Judgment.  
The Millennium.

**Chapter 21‡** New heaven, new earth, New Jerusalem.

**Chapter 22‡** New Jerusalem, conclusion of John's cover letter.

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\*Story of heaven

†Story of earth

‡Informational chapters

NOTE: The story of chapter 19 begins in heaven and, with verse 11, moves to earth. The story of chapter 20 begins on earth, and with verse 11, moves to heaven.

# The First and Last Resurrections



## 1. The First Resurrection (Rev. 20:5-6).

A. Resurrection of dead in Christ, including Old Testament saints, at the appearing of Jesus (I Cor. 10:1-4; 15:51-52; I Thess. 4:16).

B. Catching up of living saints to meet Christ in the air (I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thess. 4:17).

C. Catching up of the Great Multitude (mid- Tribulation saints) (Rev. 7:9).

D. Catching up of 144,000 servants of God (Rev. 14:1-5).

E. Resurrection and catching up of the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11).

F. Resurrection of Tribulation martyrs (Rev. 20:4, 6) and any righteous of the second half of the Tribulation who may have died of a natural cause.

## 2. The Last Resurrection and Great White Throne Judgment.

A. The wicked of all ages (Rev. 20:5, 11-15).

– APPENDIX 11 –

# Biblical Rules of Interpretation



The study of the Scriptures reveals several built-in rules that assist us with both proper interpretation and rightly dividing the Word of Truth. The first one to consider is the rule of double reference.

It becomes evident from the study of the Old Testament that there are many truths and instructions that also apply to the Church. Let us not forget that, although Jesus delivered us from the curse of the Law, He did not do away with the righteousness of the Law. Therefore, when one of the Old Testament writers sets forth righteous instructions, it is as much for us as it was for the people of Israel. Also, when God pronounced blessings, they are equally ours through Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:13-14). Since God is not a respecter of persons, He would not work miracles for Israel and not do the same for us.

We are also instructed to recognize the examples within the Old Testament of both the success and failures of Israel, thereby learning and benefiting from their record (I Cor. 10:11).

Another rule of interpretation covers the use of the word *sea*. There are numerous times in which it refers to an existing body of water. When that is not the case, it will be identifying a mass of humanity – a sea of people.

When reading Scripture and the word *sea* appears, examine the entire passage of Scripture sufficiently to determine whether it is indeed identifying a body of water or referring to masses of people.

The book of Revelation provides us some good examples. One is found in chapter 17 in which the harlot is described as “sitting upon many waters.” The fifteenth verse of that chapter clearly describes the many waters as

peoples, multitudes and nations.

First Samuel 13:5 provides us another excellent example of this rule, and there are a number more.

A similar rule covers the use of the word *mountain*. When reading Scripture in which the word *mountain* is used, if an existing mountain of rock is not identified by name or geographical location, then it is identifying a kingdom. The words *mountain* and *kingdom* become interchangeable.

An excellent example is found in Daniel 2:34-35, 44. You will notice that in verse 35 the word *mountain* is used, while in verse 44 the word *kingdom* is used, both identifying the same majestic act of the Almighty.

These simple rules will enable you to have good understanding of the scriptural account.

Remember, knowledge is the result of diligent study. We learn by repetition, so make the book of Revelation part of your knowledge (II Tim. 2:15; John 14:26).

# Dr. Hilton Sutton



Dr. Hilton Sutton is one of the world's foremost authorities on the prophetic Scriptures, including the majestic book of Revelation. He is in great demand as a speaker for churches, Bible colleges, national and international conventions, and for radio and television audiences around the world. He teaches Bible prophecy without doom, gloom, or speculation in an edifying way that inspires victory, joy, peace, and hope, setting believers free from unscriptural fear of the future.

Following his military service during World War II, Dr. Sutton studied music at Lamar University. He attended the Southwestern Assemblies of God University upon accepting a call to the ministry. Centreville Bible College of the American Baptist bestowed a Doctorate of Divinity for his research, studies, and writing concerning the book of Revelation. Dr. Sutton's Doctorate of Theology is from Cornerstone University in Jerusalem, Israel. Also, an honorary Doctorate of Christian Ministries was bestowed in 1989 by El Seminario Teologico Misionero of Guatemala, C.A.

Presently, Dr. Sutton is president of Hilton Sutton World Ministries with executive offices in Allen, Texas. He is the leader and senior minister of Christ In You World Outreach, based in Uganda, Africa. He is a member of the Executive Board of World Ministry Fellowship of Plano, Texas, and was a founding trustee of the International Charismatic Bible Ministries of Tulsa, Oklahoma. He is also an active member of the International Convention of Faith Ministries of Arlington, Texas, and Faith Christian Fellowship of Tulsa, Oklahoma. He has personally addressed the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States Military, the Israeli Knesset and the Israeli Foreign Ministry. He is acquainted with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and his personal friends include President Shimon Peres, Yitzak Shamir, the late

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Dr. Sutton has authored numerous books, including a verse-by-verse study of the book of Revelation entitled, *Revelation Revealed*. *The Revelation Teaching Syllabus* is a companion piece to *Revelation Revealed* that also serves as a teaching guide to his fourteen-hour study of the book of Revelation available on CD and DVD. The in-depth Revelation study brings this vitally important book to life. The walk through the book of Revelation is a blessing to study and all who sit under this teaching come away with a greater understanding of “God’s Grand Finale.” The Revelation study on DVD has been used for curriculum in many Bible schools, study groups, and churches around the world.

Dr. Sutton’s extraordinary collection of books, CDs and DVDs on the subject of Bible prophecy have blessed and edified hundreds of thousands of people in many nations. His sixty years of study and preaching the prophecies of the Scripture qualify him as the senior prophetic teacher of our day. Dr. Sutton’s weekly telecast, *Bible Prophecy Unraveled*, is carried by the LeSea Television Network, World Harvest Television, and more than seventy stations including Direct TV and the AT&T Network.

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*Also By Hilton Sutton, Th.D.*

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